Eberron
Dragonshards

Dragonshards
And So It Begins…

By Keith Baker

The hall was filled with armored bones. Pierce had struck down five Karrnathi skeletons in as many minutes but there seemed to be an endless supply of the undead soldiers. Glancing down, Daine saw the source of their troubles. The shattered bones were creeping and rolling across the floor, knitting together to form new warriors. It could only be the work of the machine. "Lei!" he cried. "We're running out of time!"

The artificer paid no attention. Her eyes were focused on the eldritch machine before her. She could feel negative energy rising from the tangled mass of black steel, as the power of the Endless Night slowly filled the Khyber dragonshards. She had to detach the crystals from the sinister artifact but could she do it without releasing a lethal burst of dark power?

Across the chamber, the barred gate flew open. The necromancer strode into the chamber, her gilded deathmask glittering in the light of the everburning torches. Even as Daine turned to face the new threat, a knot of armored zombies flooded in behind her. "It's already too late," she said, her voice a throaty rasp. "The age of death has begun!"

By now, the **Eberron** Campaign Setting has found its way onto bookshelves around the world. This book provides you with all of the information you need to run or take part in an **Eberron** campaign. Sadly, there's a limit to how much information can be squeezed into 320 pages, and that's where *Dragonshards* comes in. Each week, we'll explore a different aspect of Eberron and how it can affect your campaign. To begin with, we're going to cover broad topics: the Last War, religion, dragonmark houses, use of magic, and the overall tone of the setting. Beyond that we'll get more specific, looking at individual organizations, deities, places, races, customs, and history. If there something you'd like to see, post your request on the **Eberron** message board!

To have a campaign, you need to have characters. To kick things off, let's look at creating characters in Eberron.

What Makes a Hero?

One of the fundamental ideas of the **Eberron** Campaign Setting is that the player characters are remarkable people. You have a potential that most people simply cannot match -- except, of course, for the worst villains of the world, which is why heroes are needed in the first place.

Unless yours is a high-powered campaign, characters start out at 1st level. Many of the greatest characters of film, literature, and myth have humble beginnings. The key to being fully prepared for the colorful future that lies ahead is to develop your character from the beginning with the future in mind. If your game was a story, why would people want to read about you? What makes you an interesting character? What hints at your hidden potential? Consider the following.

Alignment

In Eberron, alignment is not black and white. It's important to remember that the *Player's Handbook* describes alignment as "a tool... not a straitjacket" and emphasizes that behavior can vary from day to day. Alignment provides insight into how you see the world. Are you a true hero, a cynic who's just trying to get through the day, or a power-hungry manipulator with pawns instead of friends?

When building your character, alignment is a key decision, not an afterthought; decide *why* the character is that way. Perhaps he began as an idealistic, lawful good follower of the Church of the Silver Flame but after witnessing or participating in unspeakable horrors in the Last War, he was beaten down into cynical neutrality. Maybe she began as a neutral evil member of a powerful criminal guild in Sharn but the tragic death of a friend caused her to reverse her outlook on life and seek redemption.

Our experiences and environment often shape our outlook on the world. What caused you to be the way you are today? The more thought you put into this, the better prepared you'll be when it's time to decide between toeing the line of alignment or stepping across it.

Region of Origin

Every nation of Eberron has a story, and you should think about your character's homeland and the impact it's had on him. The nation of Cyre was destroyed during the Last War. How would this affect a native of Cyre? Is she still searching for friends and family or has she given them up for dead? Is there an heirloom lost in the Mournland that the character has sworn to recover? What about the people trying to rebuild Cyran communities, such as Desolate and New Cyre? Does your character support these refugees and undertake adventures on their behalf, or has he cast aside that part of his past?

Each nation has a similar set of questions. If a character grew up in the Eldeen Reaches, did she fight the forces of Aundair or support the kingdom against the rebels of the Reaches? An elf character might be a Valenar warrior, an Aereni mystic, or an expatriate who has adopted the culture of one of the other nations of Khorvaire.

There's a lot to think about when choosing a homeland. Study the regions and think about how they can intertwine with the story you want your character to weave.

Religion

Religion will be examined in more detail in the future but your character's faith needs to be considered from the very beginning. What impact has religion had on his life?

If he follows the Sovereign Host, has he chosen a particular sovereign as his personal patron? Does he believe that the sovereigns have directly touched his life? Does he carry a token of one or more of the deities, or stop by a shrine when he arrives at a new city?

The Silver Flame advocates the destruction of physical, supernatural, and spiritual evil. If your character follows the Flame, how faithful is she to its ideals? Is she a zealot constantly striving to improve the world, and if so, does she use a sword or words? Is she a believer in name only, hoping to use the resources of the church for personal gain?

Perhaps your character doesn't follow any religion. If so, what does that mean? Was his belief shattered by a tragic experience? Does he believe that faith is a fool's game, and divine magic comes from a secular source?

In addition to the impact of personal faith, consider the dealings a character has had with other religions. A follower of the Silver Flame might have clashed with the Blood of Vol or the Cults of the Dragon Below.

Signs and Portents

A mysterious past is a tried and true way to spice up a character. Perhaps she has a birthmark in the shape of a sword or an unusual planar conjunction occurred at the moment of her birth. Perhaps she was left at the doorstep of a temple and knows nothing of her true parents. You don't need to decide what the mystery means at the beginning of the game. On the contrary, the goal is to give the Dungeon Master a tool for fashioning future stories. The outcome can be as much of a surprise to the player as the character. Eberron allows the potential for characters to reach epic levels and become the most powerful figures in the world; leaving open-ended mysteries in their past can help explain this potential. Don't be afraid of being melodramatic; melodrama plays well in a setting like **Eberron**.

These are only a few of the things to consider during character design. Other important questions include the effect that the Last War had on your character and, most importantly, what binds your fellow adventurers Together. Review the "Creating a Party" section in Chapter Nine of the **Eberron** Campaign Setting for more ideas on this subject. Along with your companions, you're writing a story: make it interesting from the very beginning!

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Dragonshards
The Last War

By Keith Baker

The stormship dropped from the night sky. The sleek longboat's black hull was almost invisible from the ground. A ring of elemental air held the ship aloft, only revealed when lightning flashed around the ring. A roll of thunder heralded the arrival of the warship, and a wave of arrows rained down upon the Cyran army. Sorcerous blasts of fire shattered the battlefield, killing friend and enemy alike. Within minutes, hundreds of soldiers were dead, and the tide of battle had been irrevocably altered.

The kingdom of Galifar ruled the continent of Khorvaire for almost 900 years. This peace was far from perfect. The western coast was a haven for all manner of beasts and monsters. Hostile goblins and kobolds lurked in the high mountains. Lhazaar lords sought profit on the seas. Occasionally a prince of Galifar would turn against tradition and fight the laws of succession. Such rebellions were rare, however, and the royal family always managed to put aside its differences in the face of these would-be usurpers.

That was the situation in the kingdom for 894 years.

Why, at that point, did three of Jarot's heirs turn against centuries of tradition? Perhaps it was merely a matter of time. Since the founding of the Kingdom, the five nations had grown apart, with national pride and identity growing more pronounced with each century. Maybe it was an unfortunate conflict of strong personalities. Thalin of Thrane saw a chance to spread his faith; Kaius of Karrnath believed his sister lacked the strength to hold the throne; Wroann of Breland had long been an agent of change. All three may have acted on their own accord ... but perhaps they were the pawns of darker forces with a vested interest in the fall of Galifar. The Dreaming Dark has always used discord as a weapon. The Lords of Dust love chaos in all forms, and the Blood of Vol surely saw war as a way to increase its power in Karrnath. The full truth may never be known but the results are plain to see.

The conflict lasted far longer than the lives of the rulers that began it. Over the course of 102 years, the tides of war rose and fell. Alliances formed and collapsed. Nations were torn apart by civil strife and betrayal as Valenar, Darguun, and the Eldeen Reaches were born. Truces all were temporary, and never was there a time when all five nations were at peace; sooner or later the old conflicts would flare up again from the glowing coals of resentment. Only the utter destruction of Cyre brought all combatants to the table. In 996, the twelve nations of Khorvaire were recognized by the Treaty of Thronehold, and the Last War officially came to an end.

War in the World

The Last War is a central element of the **Eberron**Campaign Setting. The war lasted more than a century and it has been over for less than two years. Future Dragonshard articles will focus on specific aspects of the conflict: famous battles, legendary heroes, and the techniques of warfare developed in the last days of Galifar. For now, here are a few brief ideas for tying the theme of the war into your Eberron campaign.

War Torn Lands

A century of war has taken its toll on Khorvaire. Any time a party travels near the borders of nations -- the old front lines -- the signs of conflict should be easy to see. Burnt-out villages are choked with ashes and weeds. Shattered bridges lay in heaps. Conductor stones that were torn out of the ground prevent use of the lightning rail. Magical scorch marks scar the earth. In larger communities, there may be signs of occupation or sorcerous attack. Bands of refugees seeking to rebuild their lives clog the roads or barely survive in squalid camps. Think about ways to drive this point home. Instead of a cheerful inn, the party may come upon a charred shell of a tavern, home to a ragged band of peasants who have turned to banditry to survive. Such brigands are no match for the adventurers, but is there any victory to be had from fighting them?

The largest monument to the war is the Mournland, which is now one vast dungeon. Its ruins are recent rather than ancient but it is still filled with the treasures of a nation, guarded by strange monsters and terrible magic.

Psychological Scars

The psychological effects of the war are more pervasive than the physical damage and can be felt across the continent. A general aura of pessimism grips the population. Beyond the horror of the war, the Mournland casts a pall across the psyche of Khorvaire. No one knows what caused the terrible destruction or even whether it could strike again. Some Khyber cults and druid sects believe the Mournland is the first sign of a coming apocalypse. This fear is coupled with suspicion and anger. King Kaius's signature on the Treaty of Thronehold means nothing to the former Karrn soldier whose family was slaughtered during a Thrane offensive. The people of Thrane hate Karrnath with a passion. Aundair has never forgiven the Eldeen Reaches. No one trusts the Valenar. A former soldier who advertises his allegiance may receive Hostile or Unfriendly reactions in enemy nations but there may be smaller touches as well. Perhaps the innkeeper lost his only daughter in the battle of Keldan Ridge, and he wants the Karrnish fighter in the party to remember her name. Revenge and greed can motivate many adventures, as the party investigates the murder of a former general or searches for weapon caches hidden on the border of the Mournland.

Conspiracies

The destruction of Galifar created an immense power vacuum across Khorvaire. Some seek to seize this power, while others long for a sense of security that no longer flows from the crown. As a result, the influence of cults and conspiracies has grown tremendously. Even a seemingly simple village may harbor a cult of the Dragon Below or a cell of the Emerald Claw, while a town may contain a half-dozen competing factions. The campaign setting book describes a number of influential organizations but these are merely the beginning. Others could form around religious beliefs, military service, or shared blood. Royal courts are full of political intrigue. These organizations are spread much wider than people expect; everyone is looking for something to hold onto, and even the smallest thorp may be home to a secret society.

Personal Experience

When creating a party, players should think about how the war affected their characters. Did they fight; if so, who for? Did they lose family and friends? Shared military experience can be a strong basis for an adventuring party, especially if the PCs fought for the nation of Cyre, which no longer exists. If you follow this path, you might consider running your first adventure as a "flashback" to the war. Playing out a particularly interesting or disturbing military mission can clearly establish the effect of the war on the world and set up allies or enemies that can appear in future adventures. This also allows PCs to enter the post-

war world with a little experience under their belts.

The Mother of Invention

The warforged, the airship, undead troops, and the eternal wand were all developed as weapons of war, and these are only the beginning. Future articles will explore magical warfare in more detail; until then, enlarge upon your own ideas for weapons or spells that were developed for battle. What was House Cannith working on in its hidden think tanks in the Mournland? What terrible secrets are waiting to be discovered?

These are just a few examples of the impact of the war. As you develop adventures or character backgrounds, take a moment to think about how the war can be woven into your story!

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Religion in Eberron

By Keith Baker

Sadrian scowled as he watched the archierophant conduct the Ritual of Cleansing. He could sense the darkness in her soul; like so many of the priests in Sharn, she was filled with ambition and greed. But the Council of Cardinals had invested Ythana Morr with her position, and he had seen her perform miracles with the power of the Flame; it was not the place of a lowly Templar to challenge her faith.

Religion plays an important role in Eberron, and future Dragonshards will take a closer look at each of the major religions found in the world. First it is necessary to understand the role of religion and divine magic in the setting, and the ways that the churches and clerics of Eberron differ from their counterparts in other published worlds.

The Nature of the Gods

In many **Dungeons & Dragons** settings, deities are beings that player characters can interact with directly. There is no question whether the gods exist; if you're an experienced planar traveler, you can drop by Asgard and beat up Thor. Fundamentally, deities are just very powerful characters.

This is not the case in Eberron. While many of the deities are portrayed with anthropomorphic icons, they do not walk the mortal world or even the known planes. If they exist at all, deities inhabit a higher plane of existence -- a realm that cannot be reached with *planar travel*. Some believe that the souls of heroes travel to this realm after passing through the darkness of Dolurrh; while this is a comforting belief, it has never been proven.

If the gods may not even exist, who do you *commune* with? Why do *planar allies* answer your call? Divine magic exists, and most believe that it is a gift from the gods. Something provides answers to *commune*, and a priest believes it to be his deity. A skeptic may counter that it is the collective unconscious or merely a powerful outsider. As for *planar allies*, reverence for the gods is not limited to mortals. Celestials and fiends also worship deities. An archon dedicated to Dol Arrah may never have seen the face of the goddess but it believes in her implicitly, and it will aid those mortals who fight in her name.

Ultimately, belief in a deity is a matter of faith. Each deity represents an ideal and espouses a certain code and approach to life. When you embrace the path of a god, you become part of a community in the mortal world. Perhaps, if you are deeply spiritual, you will gain the power to perform miracles of divine magic. This is what people expect of the gods of Eberron: they affect the world by guiding and empowering their followers, not by manifesting and taking direct action.

Alignment versus Belief

One of the major changes in the **Eberron**Campaign Setting is that a cleric's alignment does not have to match that of his deity. A lawful evil cleric can worship a chaotic good god, and he will still receive spells and granted powers. The main question is what this divergent alignment means. It may be that the priest is

betraying the ideals of his church. It is equally possible that the priest fervently believes in the principles of his religion but approaches them in an unusual manner. For example, an inquisitor of the Silver Flame may be lawful evil. He is willing to torture and kill in the interest of what he views as "the greater good," and he truly believes that he is carrying out the wishes of the Flame when he does so. Good-aligned members of the church may find his methods abhorrent, but the question is whether his results serve the goals of the church. In the minds of the people, questions of good and evil are far broader than "what can be detected by *detect evil*?" When the Silver Flame began its crusade against lycanthropy, the soldiers knew that there were individual lycanthropes that were not evil. But lycanthropy itself -- a curse that could corrupt the body and soul of anyone it touched -- was seen as evil, and the sacrifice of innocents was necessary to purge the greater darkness.

Pantheistic Clerics and the Cleric with No God

One of the predominant religions of Eberron is the worship of the Sovereign Host, along with its shadow, the Dark Six. Most people worship the entire host and address their prayers to whichever deity suits the needs of the moment. A traveler may offer a prayer to Kol Korran when boarding a ship, give thanks to Olladra after an excellent meal, and make a sacrifice to Dol Dorn when a pirate ship appears on the horizon. Priests typically serve a particular sovereign, but a cleric can choose to worship the pantheon as a whole.

As described on page 35 of the **Eberron**Campaign Setting, it is possible for a cleric to have no god and still perform divine magic. This is not, however, the same as having no beliefs; it still requires a strong commitment to an ideal or a philosophy. The cleric needs to devise his own system of belief and explain how it justifies the domains he has selected, and the DM always has the authority to disallow a combination of domains. The goal is to allow a broad range of personal faiths -- like the warforged developing their own religions -- not to encourage players to pick domains based solely on granted abilities.

Divine Magic in the World

Arcane magic is seen as a science. It is a force that can be controlled through formula and incantation. Divine magic is quite different: it is a miracle of faith. True clerics are rare. They are the crusaders of the church, skilled in battle and capable of channeling the power of their deity. The vast majority of priests are experts who possess no spellcasting ability whatsoever. An average religious expert might possess Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (History), Heal, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive, and use these skills to provide spiritual guidance to her community. Most divine spellcasters are adepts, just as most arcane spellcasters are magewrights. A cleric of any level is a remarkable figure.

A side effect of this is that most temples do not sell divine spells. To begin with, many temples don't have a divine spellcaster. Those that do will not sell the gifts of their god for mere gold. If the petitioner is a loyal member of the faith, an adept may aid him at no cost, or the adept may set a price based on the abilities of the adventurer, calling upon him to make a sacrifice to prove his faith or perform a service in the name of the church. The more powerful the spell, the more significant the sacrifice or service. If a nonbeliever serves the cause of the church, it's possible a priest will provide assistance, but a temple is not a marketplace. No one can demand a miracle as if purchasing a spell from a wizard's guild. Needless to say, this makes a character's choice of religion an important decision. A cleric of the Blood of Vol will never consider helping a follower of the Silver Flame, and you'd be soiling your faith even to ask.

There is a notable exception to this rule: corrupt clerics. Especially in Breland, there are priests who are more interested in lining their pockets than serving the faithful. If you can find such a cleric, you can

purchase any spell he can cast, at standard prices.

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Dragonshards
Demographics

By Keith Baker

Eberron draws on pulp adventure for inspiration. In pulp tales, the heroes are remarkable people with skills and abilities that set them apart from the common populace. Eberron attempts to replicate this flavor. In Eberron, an 18th-level character is the stuff of legends. If player characters reach this level of power, they will be among the greatest heroes in the world. There have been heroes with such power in the past, but most have fallen to the passage of time or passed away in the long war. The player characters have the potential to be the heroes of this age, and should the threat of Xoriat return or the Dreaming Dark finally make its move, the party may be the force that kings look to for aid.

Action points separate player characters from the masses. Aside from player characters, only the greatest villains and most important NPCs possess action points. Looking to a novel or movie, fortune often seems to favor the main characters, and this is the purpose of action points: to allow the party to shine even when facing opponents of equivalent power.

Player characters are also distinguished by their PC classes. Most nobles are aristocrats, not fighters and wizards. The typical soldier uses warrior levels, and a common priest is an expert or adept, not a cleric. The PC classes are more versatile and powerful than NPC classes: a wizard is far superior to a magewright, and a cleric outstrips an adept both in battle and in the ability to use divine magic. As a result, even a low-level character with a PC class is a remarkable individual. This does not mean that the characters are the only fighters and wizards in the world.

Just because the bulk of the population uses NPC classes doesn't mean that a DM has to use NPC classes for all of the people who challenge or oppose the party. Elite forces such as the warforged troops produced in the Last War, the artificers of House Cannith, or the assassins of House Thuranni can use PC classes, and there certainly are clerics in the Church of the Silver Flame in addition to experts and adepts. These people are remarkable individuals in their own right, and even at low levels they command respect from those around them. In a world where the average soldier is a 2nd-level warrior, a 5th-level fighter can be an important individual. This is the case in Eberron.

The important thing is that NPCs do not follow the same rules as PCs. They do not acquire experience and advance in levels as player characters do. It's perfectly possible for a Brelish soldier to spend 20 years fighting in the wars and still be a 2nd or 3rd-level warrior. This is not about realism; if it was, you'd never see any 20th-level characters, when you consider the superhuman level of skill this represents. This is about replicating the flavor of movies and novels in which heroes and villains stand far above the common folk. The supporting cast shouldn't overshadow the main characters.

Challenging Adventurers

The relative scarcity of high-level NPCs is something that sets Eberron apart from many other published worlds. Some Dungeon Masters may feel that no forces can challenge a high-level party or keep them in check. In terms of enemies, foes exist that can pose a threat to even a 20th-level character. The Chamber can draw on the power of a nation of dragons. The Devourer of Dreams can pose a threat to an epic-level party. The Lords of

Dust are millions of years old and can be as powerful as the DM cares to make them. Should a 50-HD daelkyr ever escape from the seals of Khyber, it will put a dent in most adventurers' days. As described in Chapter Nine of the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, a DM should also consider recurring villains -- opponents who grow in power with the party. The Lord of Blades is only 12th-level now, so the party has a chance of fighting him and surviving. By the time the party members are 12th-level, he may be 15th; by the time they reach 20th level, he may be an epic foe.

Beyond mere monsters, it's important to remember that there is more to challenge and threat than level numbers. The dragonmark houses, Church of the Silver Flame, and royal family have influence and resources. Just because the characters are 18th level doesn't mean they should make enemies of House Thuranni; a group of 12th-level assassins with specialized equipment, careful strategy, and the advantage of surprise can wipe out a higher level group. A 1st-level innkeeper can put deadly poison in a drink. High-level characters can accomplish amazing feats but they should never become complacent about their mortality or overconfident of their invulnerability.

The flip side of this is that the PCs may find themselves in need of powerful allies. As noted above, level is not necessarily the key factor in determining the value of an ally. Even a 20th-level character can benefit from the magic items provided by House Cannith. More importantly, the concept of gray alignment in Eberron means that villains themselves may occasionally become allies. The goal of restricting powerful, benevolent NPCs in Eberron is to prevent the party and the world from relying on NPCs to solve their problems for them. If the party needs to forge a temporary alliance with the Daughters of Sora Kell or the Lord of Blades, that's good drama. How far do you trust your ally, and what happens when you cross paths again?

Determining Class and Level

As a result of all of the factors mentioned above, the overall demographics of class and level in the world are different from those presented in Chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide.* Characters who have more than twelve levels in a PC class are truly remarkable, even in the greatest cities of Khorvaire. As a result, when you are determining the highest-level character in an Eberron settlement, use the following tables in place of the ones in the *Dungeon Master's Guide.*

Community Modifiers

Community Size	Community Modifier
Thorp	-3
Hamlet	-2
Village	-1
Small town	0
Large town	2
Small city	4
Large city	+6 (roll twice) 1
Metropolis	+8 (roll three times)1

1. Cities this large can have more than one high-level NPC per class, each of whom generates lower-level characters of the same class as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide.*

Highest-Level Locals

Class	Character Level
Adept	3d4 + community modifier
Aristocrat	2d4 + community modifier
Artificer3	1d3 + community modifier
Barbarian1	1d3 + community modifier
Bard	1d4 + community modifier
Cleric2	1d3 + community modifier
Commoner	4d4 + community modifier
Druid1	1d3 + community modifier
Expert	3d4 + community modifier
Fighter4	1d6 + community modifier
Magewright	3d4 + community modifier
Monk	1d3 + community modifier
Paladin2	1d3 + community modifier
Ranger1	1d3 + community modifier
Rogue	1d6 + community modifier
Sorcerer	1d3 + community modifier
Warrior	3d4 + community modifier
Wizard3	1d3 + community modifier

1. In areas where these classes are common, level is 1d8 + modifier, with a maximum value of 15. Druids are common in the Eldeen Reaches and the Shadow Marches. Rangers are typically found in the Eldeen Reaches, Shadow Marches, Talenta Plains, and Valenar. Barbarians can be found in the Demon Wastes, Darguun, Droaam, Eldeen Reaches, Shadow Marches, and Talenta Plains.

2. In Thrane, level is 1d6 + modifier. The culture of Thrane is closely tied to the Church of the Silver Flame, and many of its citizens hear the call of the Silver Flame.

3. In Aundair, level is 1d6 + modifier. In Karrnath, level is 1d4+modifier. Aundair is home to the Arcane Congress and celebrates mystics and artificers. The Twelve has its primary campus in Karrnath, and this results in a slightly higher level of mystical skill.

4. In Karrnath, level is 1d8 + modifier. Karrnath has the strongest martial tradition of the Five Nations, and the Rekkenmark Academy produces the finest officers in the land.

While high-level npcs and magic-users are rare in Eberron, the war and applied study of the arcane arts results in a wider spread of lower level characters. For this reason, in communities that are centers of commerce and craft, determine the highest-level NPC normally. The community will have twice as many characters of that class who are two levels below this level (11, 9, 7...), and twice as many 1st-level characters as 2nd-level characters. The remainder of the population should be divided into 1st-level characters as follows: 90% commoners, 5%

warriors, 3% experts, 1% magewrights, and 1% divided equally between adepts and aristocrats.

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Dragonshards
Heroic Journeys

By Keith Baker

The thin man pulled back his left sleeve. The mark of Passage was spread across his forearm, a complex pattern that seemed to be painted with blue light. For a moment it burned with a deeper light, and a haze of heat surrounded the mark. Then a vibration rumbled through the ground. Seconds later, a bizarre contrivance rose out of the earth. Roughly the size and shape of a small stagecoach, it was crusted with quartz, volcanic glass, and semiprecious stones. It had wheels, yet both the wheels and the base of the carriage were merged with the ground.

"Well, go on, get in," the man said, opening the door to the rear compartment. "We need to be off if we're to reach Marguul Pass by nightfall."

Eberron is a world of pulp adventure. One of the common themes of the pulps is travel. In a long-forgotten Lizardfolk temple in the jungles of Q'barra, a cryptic inscription leads an explorer across the ocean to the unknown wilds of Xen'drik and then down to a sunken city in the depths of Shargon's Teeth. But what's involved in travel?

Riding the Red Line

While travel is a staple of pulp adventure, it is rarely a significant part of a story. In the Indiana Jones movies, travel across the world is represented with only a few seconds of screen time, as a red line swiftly connects the hero's starting point to his destination. If an adventure begins in Valenar and the next crucial piece occurs in the Shadow Marches, it would be fairly dull to spend six game sessions covering the trip: what's important to the story is what happens at the end of the journey.

In this case, a little description can go a long way. "In Taer Vaelestas, you bargain with a Lhazaarite air privateer who agrees to fly you to Varna. There, the local Wayfinders supply you with magebred steeds and you speed down the great road, exchanging horses at Delethorn and Erlaskar. Eventually you find yourself in the town of Sylbaran, poised on the very edge of the Shadow Marches." There's no need for trouble on the road; the focus of the adventure is on the evil that waits in the Shadow Marches. People travel between Varna and Sylbaran every day -- that doesn't need to be part of the adventure.

It's All About the Journey

In *The Three Musketeers,* the quest to regain the diamond studs is a series of ambushes and traveling encounters. Much of *The Fellowship of the Rings* is one big journey. If the party is racing against the Emerald Claw to claim the Orb of Dol Azur, an occasional ambush or scheme involving agents of the Emerald Claw helps to set the tone of the story. Even if there is no clear enemy to face, many scenarios that can make travel interesting and entertaining if the DM isn't in a hurry. Is the party traveling on a lightning rail? Perhaps a band of rogue Oriens teleport aboard and hijack the caravan. An airship could come under attack by harpies, rocs, or bandits on hippogriffs, or it might crash land in the middle of the Mournland. Traveling overland, an encounter with hobgoblins in Darguun, zealous Thrane customs officials, a Karrnathi undead patrol, or Talenta raiders on

dinosaurs can help to establish the unique flavor of the different regions of Eberron. It's all a matter of balance. If the adventure were a movie, would travel occur in the blink of an eye, or would you be willing to sacrifice a fifth of your running time to the voyage?

Keeping Track of Time

Whether the DM uses the red line or the extended journey, a critical question is whether he keeps track of time. Eberron is a large world; by the maps, it can take an Orien caravan 100 days to cross from one end of Breland to the other. Eberron is also a world of cinematic action and adventure, so realism is optional. If the DM doesn't want to deal with the passage of significant amounts of time during the course of the adventure, he has a few options. The first is to look at the additional modes of transportation listed below. If the party has a patron prepared to provide them with tickets on the Orien express, speed is not a concern. The second is to simply ignore time. In *Raiders of the Lost Ark,* how long does it take Indiana Jones to get to Tibet? No one knows. It's not relevant to the story, and there's no need to worry about it. All that matters is that eventually he gets there and the story begins again.

If the DM wants a more realistic game, he probably wants to consider how the passage of time affects the rest of the world. If the party leaves Sharn and comes back after a round trip of 200 days, things may have shifted in their absence. The balance of power in the criminal underworld might have changed. An ally of the party might have been murdered, providing fuel for a future investigation. Political tensions may have flared up: a border skirmish between Thrane and Karrnath might threaten to start the Last War anew. This can also explain how the Lord of Blades can be back with a new scheme when the party defeated him only two real weeks ago: on Eberron, it's been half a year, and the Lord of Blades has had plenty of time to plan his revenge! Each approach has advantages. The final choice is up to the DM.

Airships, Lightning Rails, and... Horses.

Eberron offers a few basic modes of travel.

- Characters can travel on foot or horseback, just as in any other setting. This follows the standard rules for travel as described on page 164 of the *Player's Handbook*. Add +1 miles/hour to the unencumbered overland speed of a magebred horse, allowing a magebred light horse to travel 56 miles in a day. A Valenar riding horse has a base overland speed of 8 miles/hour and can travel 64 miles in a day.

- Sea travel follows the overland rules, but most vessels are built from soarwood and travel at twice the standard speed. In addition, the elemental galleons of House Lyrandar can travel at speeds of up to 20 miles/hour -- 480 miles/day -- at only twice the standard cost for sea travel. When going from Sharn to any port, the elemental galleon provides the best balance of speed to gold.

- The lightning rail travels at a rate of 30 miles/hour and can travel straight through the night, up to 720 miles/day. However, it too has its limitations. It only connects major cities, and the war destroyed many rail lines -- notably the path through the Mournland. In addition, Orien charges a high price for independent passengers.

- Airships are the latest form of transportation. The typical airship travels 20 miles/hour and can cover 480 miles in a day. Airships require special docks, and there are relatively few in the Lyrandar fleet. As a result, airship travel is very expensive and only connects major cities.

Low-level groups are not going to have the gold to afford the faster forms of travel. The Wayfinder Foundation, Library of Korranberg, and similar groups have special arrangements with Lyrandar and Orien. If the party is working for such an organization, the boss will pick up travel expenses. This can even be a form of treasure: a carte blanche providing one month of free use of the services of House Orien. Beyond that, adventurers can always try to stow away or engage the services of air privateers or rogue artificers who have constructed "lightning jumpers," small vehicles that make use of the lightning rail. Without a true heir of the house at the reins, such vessels can be quite unreliable!

When You Absolutely, Positively Must Get There ...

Travel in Eberron will be explored in greater detail in future products. If a story requires speed above all else, the DM could use any of the following ideas.

- *Horseshoes of speed* increase a horse's base overland speed by 3 miles/hour (24 miles/day). There are rumors that House Orien has developed a dragonshard focus item that doubles the speed of a horse, provided an heir of the mark is within 30 feet. It's said that the Valenar elves also have spells and magic items that further enhance the speed and endurance of a horse.

- If money is truly no object, an heir of the Greater Mark of Passage can teleport you in the blink of an eye. Of course, as a rule this service can only be found in the largest cities of Khorvaire.

- Some say that House Orien has developed a small, fast vehicle that uses the lightning rail system and is just as safe as the standard rail. Similar in size to a stagecoach, these *Orien Express* cars travel at

speeds up to 60 miles/hour, or 1,440 miles/day. There are also rumors about vehicles using bound earth elementals which can travel without the need for rails. However, both of these are theoretical and available for use only at the DM's discretion -- most likely, only when working for a patron with a considerable amount of pull, or for Orien itself.

- Similarly, rumors say that House Lyrandar and the Zil shipwrights have produced a small, experimental airship capable of traveling 50 miles/hour and landing without a full dock.

Ultimately, travel should add to the game experience, not detract from it. The DM needs to decide when to track travel and when it's best to let it slip by in the scene break.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the *Eberron* Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

Swashbuckling 101: Combat

By Keith Baker

Daine dived forward as the massive maul came down, shattering the flagstone where he'd been standing. The warforged titan tried to crush him underfoot, but Daine rolled beneath its legs to come up behind the huge construct. His daring maneuver bought him only scant seconds of life. The mystic seal would not open until the titan was destroyed, and the titan needed to land only one solid blow to shatter every bone in Daine's body. There was one other possibility...

Daine sprinted to the far end of the foundry floor. The titan charged after, crushing old bones beneath its massive feet ... exactly what Daine had counted on. Daine's dagger was next to useless against the vast bulk of the titan, but the adamantine blade could cut through steel. As the construct pounded across the chamber, Daine inhaled deeply and flung the dagger at the chain net hanging from the ceiling. His timing was perfect. The spinning blade severed only four strands, but that weakened the net just enough. It tore to pieces as the titan passed beneath it, burying the automaton under a hail of steel ore. A moment later, the massive gate creaked open.

The introduction of the **Eberron** *Campaign Setting* describes the tone as "swashbuckling action and dark adventure." Sounds cool, but what does it mean? As an adventurer in Eberron, you still explore dungeons and fight monsters, the same as you would in any setting. What makes it "swashbuckling action"?

That question has several answers. Action points add a cinematic tone to an adventure but action points are a mechanism: it's up to the DM and the players to set the tone.

Cinematic Action

When setting up a battle, imagine that it's a scene in a movie. If other people were actually watching, would they enjoy it? Would they hold their breath or fall asleep in their popcorn? In pulp action movies, there's much more to combat than:

"I move ten feet and swing at the troll. I rolled an 18."

"You missed. Joe?"

"I got a modified 20."

"That's a hit. How much damage?"

"Six points."

"It's still fighting. It hits you for seven points."

"Ouch."

Think about action scenes in your favorite movies. What can you add, as a DM or player?

The first thing to consider is the environment. Is the chamber a perfect square with no furnishings or distinguishing features? If not, is there some way you can incorporate the features of the room such as furniture, loose flagstones, or tapestries, into your action? Why flank the enemy by walking when you could swing a chain, dive through a window, or perform a cool tumble. Think about the action you are performing -- fighting defensively, using Power Attack, making a Rapid Shot -- and ask whether you can add a little color to the description. If you were writing a novel or directing a movie, you'd never just say, "I increase my AC by 3 points using Combat Expertise." You'd need an interesting way to present that information. Describe how you weave a wall of steel with your blade, warding off attacks while lashing out at your foe.

If a character hits or misses a creature, the DM can use the degree of failure to come up with an interesting description. A terrible roll may miss completely, but a close one may still draw draw blood or rebound off heavy armor plate.

Consider the actions of the opponent; if the target is using Dodge or Combat Expertise, work that into the description. "Lord ir'Dalin is a skilled swordsman, but he can't match your speed; even as he raises his sword into guard position, you drop beneath the parry and bury your point between his ribs."

Add color to descriptions of damage, too, based on how many hit points the target has left; if Lord ir'Dalin still has 90 hit points, that blow should barely nick his chest, but if it drops him to single-digit hit points it may have caught him squarely in the ribs.

Of course, there are limits to the amount of energy you can put into each scene. When the party fights 20 bandits, you can't relate blow-by-blow descriptions of 20 attacks. You can still add a little color; instead of saying "he attacks you," try "he growls and swings his blade," "he tries to smash your skull with his splintered club," or "she sneers and thrusts at you with her rusty sword." If you were writing a book instead of playing **D&D**, how would you describe the scene in order to maintain the interest of the reader? What makes fighting this group of bandits different from fighting a group of disciplined Darguul mercenaries?

Colorful Combat

Beyond the use of cinematic description, the swashbuckling tone of the setting is enhanced if players sometimes perform actions that aren't the most obvious or even the most sensible choices. In your next barfight, instead of just pulling out your sword and hitting someone, tip the table onto them! Yank the carpet out from under someone's feet. Spend a round drinking someone else's ale before returning to the fray. Scramble up a rope or tapestry instead of just climbing the stairs.

In general, if an improvised action is colorful, fun, and does not provide the player with a substantial advantage that he couldn't normally get, then he shouldn't be penalized for trying it. If there's a rope by the landing and the PC wants to swing down to confront the bad guy, that's terrific window dressing. Requiring a skill check in that situation would only penalize the player for being impulsive and creative. On the other hand, if the player is trying a maneuver that will give the PC a considerable advantage over his foe -- allowing him to attack from a flank, bypass a trap, avoid an attack of opportunity, or something similar -- then calling for a check is appropriate.

A DM can encourage this sort of action by rewarding clever, colorful actions with free bonuses. These should not be things that the party relies upon receiving; they are gifts the DM grants, not rights that the party can demand.

If a character comes up with something colorful and appropriate that adds to everyone's enjoyment of the scene, a DM could consider the following as rewards:

- A +1 bonus to some aspect of the scene, based on the nature of the action -- an increase in damage, chance to hit, or temporary AC bonus.
- A temporary decrease to the opponent's initiative. This is particularly appropriate when tipping a bar table, cutting a tapestry off the wall, etc. The action has no serious effect but slows the opponent down long enough for other members of the party to act.
- Provide the character with one action point. In most cases this can be a temporary action point that must be used before the end of the scene. If the player was especially creative, the action point could be permanent, as long as no character ever has more than (5 + level/2) action points. An action point is a significant (potentially life-saving) reward, so reserve it for clever actions that require sacrifice or risk from the character. Never, ever allow this type of award to be taken for granted.

Depending on the DM's preferred style of play, he may create situations where straightforward combat simply cannot win the day. In the brief story at the beginning of this article, the hero is hopelessly outmatched. The encounter is not meant to be resolved through combat. Although it looks like a straightforward fight, it's actually a puzzle: the character must fight defensively and stay alive long enough to spot the element that he can use to defeat the opponent. In this sort of situation, the experience reward for defeating the encounter is actually a story reward; the experience is based on the puzzle the character needed to solve, not on the CR of the creature itself.

Action Points

As mentioned earlier, action points are a tool for enhancing combat, allowing anyone to make that critical shot or check when it really, really matters. Action points are also a way to draw the players into storytelling. The DM should always require players to justify their use of action points by describing the enhanced action in detail. Consider the player who 99% of the time just declares, "I attack the monster and roll an 18." If he wants to use an action point to enhance the roll, the DM is perfectly justified to demand a more colorful description. What makes this action so spectacular? Does the character distract his foe with a cunning move? Does he score a hit through dumb luck? Does he shift position so the sun is in his enemy's eyes? If the DM wants to hold the game to a high standard, she could rule that unless the player comes up with a good story, the action point can't be used at all!

The swashbuckling tone of **Eberron** is in your hands as both a player or DM. Action points are one tool to play with, but they're only a starting point. Add as much color as you want to your combat -- it's impossible to overdo it. The only rule that matters is: have fun!

About the Author

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Dragonshards

Intrigue and Betrayal

By Keith Baker

While Eberron is a world of action and pulp adventure, it was also inspired by the dark and uncertain tone of film noir. It is a world where little is truly as it seems, where stories don't always end well, and where allies can become enemies in the blink of an eye. While this sounds exciting, it can be difficult to do well. Here are a few points to consider if you want to add more mystery and betrayal to your campaign.

Simple Betrayal vs. the Big, Bad Picture

Betrayal is one of the classic noir themes, probably because it can be used in so many ways: the employer who lies about a job; the supposed friend who leads the party into a trap; the merchant who passes false goods. All of these can be fine plot devices when used in moderation. However, if every patron cheats the party, every guide leads them astray, and every piece of treasure turns out to be cursed, you won't create a sense of intrigue. If betrayal is so common that it becomes expected, then there's no suspense, only a frustrating sense of paranoia. If you never trust anyone, you never really feel the dramatic impact of betrayal.

Consider the following:

The party is approached by a gnome, Janius Jen Solan. Her platinum rings suggest that she is a member of the Aurum. She offers the party a considerable sum of cash to recover a Dhakaani relic from a ruin beneath Fairhaven. The porter the party hires turns out to be working for the Order of the Emerald Claw; at a key moment, he springs an undead ambush on the adventurers and tries to steal the relic. At the end, Janius appears with a small army of Deneith mercenaries -- too many for the party to fight. Instead of paying the heroes, she takes the artifact, leaving them with their lives but little else.

On a certain level, this satisfies many noir stereotypes. But how is it fun for the party? What will they do the next time a gnome offers them a job? How many hirelings can prove treacherous before the players resolve never to use NPC servants again?

As an alternative, consider this:

The party is approached by a gnome, Janius Jen Solan. While she introduces herself as a scholar from Morgrave University, her copper rings suggest that she might be a member of the Aurum; if asked about this, she acknowledges that she is a member of the lowest concord. She offers the party a moderate sum to acquire a Dhakaani relic from beneath Fairhaven, along with the promise that there will be other treasures to recover. At a key moment during the mission, the porter hired by the party reveals that he is being blackmailed by the Order of the Emerald Claw; those villains demanded that he lead the heroes into a trap. If he does not, his family will be killed. With his help, the party can plan a counter-ambush and turn the tables on the would-be assassins. The party then recovers the relic plus additional treasure, and there is much rejoicing. All seems well.

Of course, things are not what they seem. In future sessions, the party is attacked repeatedly by well-organized groups of angry Dhakaani goblinoids. It turns out that in recovering the relic and looting the other treasure in the

ruin, they desecrated one of the holiest Dhakaani tombs. Now the goblinoids will not rest until every item has been recovered. Janius was entirely ignorant of this. She is in danger from another direction, as well; she was given this task by a higher-ranking member of the Aurum, to whom she gave the relic in an attempt to rise within the ranks. She will help the party as best she can, but she has little influence, and the dwarf who now holds the relic has great influence. Can the party get the relic away from him? What sort of enemies will they make in the process?

More surprises wait to be revealed. The "porter" was actually a member of House Thuranni. The Order of the Emerald Claw never intended to ambush the party; instead, the porter tricked the party into attacking a group of Emerald Claw operatives on a top-secret mission. Now the Emerald Claw thinks that these characters are interfering with one of their major schemes, and it will take steps to end the interference. This unwittingly reveals the plot to the party, giving them a chance to stop it. But who hired the Thuranni operative? Was this an attempt to frame the player characters, or were they just convenient tools for an attack against the Claw?

Simple betrayal has obvious, short-term consequences for what are typically clear-cut heroes and villains. By contrast, a subtle scheme may take weeks or months to come to light, and there may not be an obvious bad guy. In the second example, Janius didn't realize what she was doing, and even the porter was simply doing a job; his unknown employee is the true villain.

The more subtle betrayal is less likely to cause a knee-jerk reaction in the future. Yes, the gnome nearly got them killed, but she didn't grasp the significance of the site. Besides, the PCs were the ones who looted the rest of the tomb. The next time a gnome offers them a job they may ask more questions, but hopefully they won't say "All gnomes are evil!" and refuse to play.

The key axiom to bear in mind is that *no one likes to lose*. If betrayal takes the party's victory away from them -- as when the villain steals their treasure and they get nothing -- the players will be frustrated and angry. If the betrayal simply sets a new storyline in motion, the fun of the past story is not swept away and the players can enjoy their new quest for survival ... and revenge.

Good Today, Bad Tomorrow

One of the themes of Eberron is that good and evil are not clear cut. An evil vampire can serve the greater good while a noble cleric might, with the best of intentions, set a terrible inquisition in motion. Learning a character's alignment gives you a clue as to how far you can trust her, but it's only one piece of a puzzle.

Where this is true of individuals, it is equally true of organizations. The Aurum is untrustworthy, but not every member is evil. It can take actions that will have positive results (though there's probably profit for the patron in there somewhere). An organization is a collection of individuals, each with his or her own goals. The trick is to develop contacts the party can trust so, when they get a job from a new member of the Aurum, they can check with their old ally to see where they stand -- assuming, of course, that their old ally hasn't turned against them or been replaced by the Lords of Dust. Nothing is ever certain!

Biting the Hand

While a party can be betrayed by its patrons or allies, it could also be employed by a patron who is plotting against his own organization. Then the PCs aren't the ones being betrayed. Instead they are the instruments of betrayal. Janius Jen Solan has a scheme to get to the Platinum Concord, but it involves killing a number of powerful members of the Aurum. If the party assists Janius, the characters stand to gain a considerable amount

of local influence. If they fail, they will place themselves in grave danger.

Then there is the question of Janius's motives. Is her desire for power fueled by simple greed, or is she actually a disguised member of the Lords of Dust, possessed by a spirit from the Dreaming Dark, or a spy for the Royal Eyes of Aundair?

Again, the key is not to steal the party's victory! Even if Janius lied about her motives, the party will still benefit from its association. The characters will get treasure, and experience, and the satisfaction of beating the unpleasant members of the Aurum. They'll gain a powerful patron in Janius. What happens when they discover that Janius is using them to strike against the King's Citadel? Will they get deeper into the intrigue, or will they betray their former patron?

This level of intrigue isn't for everyone. You may prefer to stick with straightforward dungeon crawls and never worry about the consequences of these tasks. As the Five nations search for ancient weapons and the secret of the Mournland, however, even dungeon crawls can be tied to political intrigue. Who knows? That magic ring you find in the goblin's cave could turn out to be the key to victory in the next war.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

Heirs of Dhakaan

By Keith Baker

"The Crown of Lhesh Dhakaan..." Halas whispered. He'd been hunting the relic for months, and now it lay before him. He moved forward, reaching toward the priceless treasure.

"Defile the crown with your touch, and I will make you eat your fingers." The voice was soft yet harsh, filled with a smoky music. Halas spun around with his blade already in hand. The speaker was a hobgoblin female dressed in black leather armor with silver studs. A massive bugbear towered over her, brandishing a great flail. To the side, Halas noted a flash of motion and spotted a second hobgoblin, dressed in a finely-crafted suit of black platemail that seemed to blend into the shadows. That warrior wielded a long chain studded with razor-sharp spikes, and before Halas could react, the chain wrapped around his blade. A moment later, he was disarmed.

The hobgoblin woman lifted the crown and turned to Halas. "This circlet is older than your race, half-elf. It is the legacy of my people, a sign of our dominion over Khorvaire. The time has come for it to be worn once more."

The **Eberron** *Campaign Setting Book* provides information about 28 organizations that play a role in the world. Many more are mentioned in passing: the Ashbound druids, the Cabinet of Faces, and the Trust of Zilargo, to name just three. In time, each of these groups will be addressed in *Dragonshards*, providing you with greater insight into the forces that shape the world. This week we examine a powerful force hiding in the shadows of Darguun: The Heirs of Dhakaan.

History

The Empire of Dhakaan was built on a foundation of martial skill. For thousands of years it dominated Khorvaire, until the coming of the Daelkyr. For all of their skill, the Dhakaani goblinoids could not stand against the might and madness of the Lords of Xoriat. By the time the Gatekeeper druids bound the Daelkyr and their servants in the depths of Khyber, the empire was a shadow of its former glory. Over the course of millennia it collapsed into savagery, and by the time humanity arrived on Khorvaire, all that was left of the empire was ruins.

Or so it seemed. As the empire crumbled, a few of the greatest generals and leaders took their clans into hiding, determined to preserve the knowledge of the Dhakaani through the darkness they saw coming.

With the rise of Darguun, the clans have emerged once more. If they united behind a single ruler, the Dhakaani clans could easily unseat the Lhesh Haruuc, and if they conquered Darguun, the Dhakaani could pose a threat to the other nations of Khorvaire.

There is one huge obstacle -- none of the clans agree who should be emperor. Who is the true heir of Dhakaan? This issue has led to endless conflicts between the modern-day Dhakaani clans that so far have kept them from posing a threat to the wider world.

One of the major differences between the Dhakaani and the other goblinoids of Khorvaire is the degree of interracial cooperation within a clan. Among the Ghaal'dar and the Marguul, the strong rule the weak. Leadership

is founded on fear, and the weaker races hate the stronger tyrants.

Among the Dhakaani goblinoids, this is not the case. Each species has a role to serve in society, and each embraces this role. The hobgoblins rule not through force of arms but because the goblins and bugbears respect their ability to maintain structure and discipline. The strength of the bugbears is turned against the enemies of the clan. These racial roles are examined below.

Dhakaani Hobgoblins

Hobgoblins have always formed the foundation of Dhakaani society, from its beginnings to the present day. They are the most disciplined of the goblinoids, both in battle and in court. The hobgoblins rule Dhakaani society, and their power is rarely contested; their leadership skills have been proven over the centuries so that the bugbears and goblins accept their respective roles in society.

Hobgoblin soldiers receive highly specialized training to serve as infantry, archers, or cavalry. The typical Dhakaani soldier is a 2nd level fighter, and all of his feats will be focused on his military specialty. An archer will have Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, and either Far Shot or Rapid Shot. A cavalry trooper will possess Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, and either Trample or Spirited Charge. The feats of an infantry soldier vary based on attribute scores. The fighting style of the Dhakaani infantry emphasizes speed over strength, so Power Attack and its related feats are rarely seen. Common feats include Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Dodge, Mobility, and Weapon Focus. Elite soldiers are renowned for their use of Spring Attack and Whirlwind Strike. The Dhakaani are also known for their use of chain weapons -- flails and spiked chains. Chain masters enjoy displaying their skills with trip and disarm attacks.

A Dhakaani army is both tightly structured and surprisingly flexible. The military is based around small units of infantry that can quickly adapt tactics and formations to evolving combat conditions. Hobgoblins are trained to work together, using techniques like Aid Another and flanking to maximize their effectiveness against powerful opponents. Dhakaani hobgoblins do not adhere to any sort of code of honor in battle, nor do they seek glory like the bugbear berserkers. A hobgoblin soldier takes pride in his skills but in battle his only goal is to achieve an objective as quickly and efficiently as possible, whether it is killing the enemy, seizing a gate, or scouting a location.

While there are a few exceptions in folklore, military service is traditionally seen as a role for male hobgoblins. Females, however, have many important roles in society. The most common form of magic among the Dhakaani is that of the bard, and this talent typically manifests only among the females of the clans. Dhakaani bards are known as *duur'kala*, "dirge singers"; they are treasured both for their abilities to inspire troops and to perform healing magic. The duur'kala are the spiritual leaders of the Dhakaani. They use tales of past glory and ancestral deeds to bind communities together and inspire them to a greater future.

Alchemy, healing, and diplomacy are also seen as female arts; the male hobgoblins fight battles, and the females heal the wounds, both physical and political. While bardic talent is very rare, many female hobgoblins have levels in expert, reflecting intense training in these advanced arts.

Dhakaani Bugbears

From an early age, bugbears are raised to think of themselves as the heroes and martyrs of Dhakaani civilization. They are taught to believe that their strength is the single greatest weapon of the Empire. Most are eager to prove their mettle and worth in battle.

Virtually all adult bugbears, both male and female, are barbarians of at least 1st level. Dhakaani barbarians are not stereotypical savages; instead, the barbarian class represents a specialized form of combat training, with the Rage ability reflecting a consciously cultivated state of battle fury. In combat, bugbear barbarians serve as skirmishers and shock troops, smashing into the ranks of their enemies and using their immense strength to scatter and break formations while the strictly disciplined hobgoblin ranks move up behind them. The favored class of the Dhakaani bugbear is barbarian.

Dhakaani Goblins

With their prolific rate of reproduction, goblins form the largest segment of any Dhakaani community. Dhakaani goblins receive far more respect than their counterparts in other goblinoid cultures; most fill the roles of peasants and tradesmen, performing noncombat tasks that support the hobgoblin and bugbear soldiers. Recently, a few goblins have explored the modern arts of arcane magic and artifice, especially among the Kech Volaar clan (see page 154 of the **Eberron** *Campaign Setting*). These goblin wizards and artificers are slowly winning respect among the clans and becoming an important part of the culture.

Two Dhakaani clans are formed entirely of goblins. Both are renowned for their impressive skills. The *taarka'khesh* ("silent wolves") is a corps of goblin scouts trained to provide intelligence in the field during military operations; taarka'khesh scouts take rogue and ranger levels. The *shaarat'khesh* ("silent blades") are an elite order of spies and assassins. The shaarat'khesh have long practiced a martial art designed to transform an unarmed goblin into a living weapon. As a result, shaarat'khesh goblins pursue both rogue and monk levels, using the Monastic Training feat. By ancient tradition, the Silent Clans do not take sides in any conflict. Instead, they act as mercenaries, providing their services to all sides and fighting their brothers when they face one another on the battlefield. This reputation for complete impartiality and reliability has kept the khesh alive for thousands of years. Its own clan will execute a goblin that betrays the secrets of a client. Generally speaking, one must be born into a khesh clan to learn its ways, but on rare occasions skilled goblins from other clans have gained admission to one of the Silent Clans.

Using the Heirs of Dhakaan

The Heirs of Dhakaan have two primary roles in an Eberron campaign. The first is as a source of goblinoid opponents that can provide unexpected challenges for high-level adventurers. Parties that think of goblinoids as pushovers are in for a surprise when they encounter the Dhakaani; these goblinoids can have significant PC class levels and excellent equipment, and they should respond with the finest tactics that the DM could devise. Just like the Lord of Blades, Dhakaani NPCs scale up in power as the adventurers rise in skill; Tuura Dhakaan and Ruus Dhakaan are heroes of their people and will become more powerful in time. Adventurers may encounter Dhakaani treasure hunters seeking to reclaim the relics of their empire. If the DM wishes, he can play up the fact that these artifacts, by rights, do belong to the Dhakaani. An adventurer who lays claim to the *Breastplate of Khamvuul Norek* and refuses to relinquish it to the Heirs of Dhakaan is, from their perspective, a common grave robber.

Another way to use the Heirs of Dhakaan is to have the PCs become actively involved in the struggles between

the Dhakaani clans. If the Kech Sharaat gain power over the other clans, they will eventually pose a threat to the people of the Five Nations. Perhaps the Kech Volaar are more reasonable, and the party needs to help Tuura Dhakaan deal with her enemies to maintain the balance of power. Perhaps Lhesh Haruuc of Darguun hires the party; the hobgoblin king wants the characters to weaken all of the Dhakaani clans, to prevent them from undermining his newborn nation.

The Dhakaani clans are also a good source of goblinoid player characters. A member of the Kech Volaar might join with a party of humans and demihumans in hope of finding lost Dhakaani treasures to return to her clan. For a change of pace, the players could make an entire party of goblinoids. Why not see what it's like to play on the other side for a while?

Because of their emphasis on the arts of war, the Heirs of Dhakaan can be a good way to bring exotic prestige classes into Eberron. Perhaps the sharaat'khesh goblins use the ninja class, while the most gifted swordsmen of the Kech Sharaat follow a tradition similar to that of the samurai. Exotic weapon masters, kensai, bladesingers, marshals, and tactical soldiers could all find a place in the clans. If a nongoblinoid character wants to pursue one of these traditions, he needs to establish a connection to the clan. Perhaps his family was enslaved during the Last War, and he earned his freedom through display of martial skill. Perhaps he can earn the friendship of a clan by finding Dhakaani artifacts and returning them to one of the chiefs!

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

Magic in Eberron: Magewrights

By Keith Baker

Magic is a part of life in Eberron. Arcane energy suffuses the world. Those with sufficient knowledge can channel and shape this power with word and gesture. Once this gift was rare and mysterious, and the greatest spells are still the stuff of legend. Over the course of centuries, however, the people of Khorvaire worked minor magics into everyday life, finding ways to use arcane power to improve communication, transportation, warfare, and general labor. The use of magic in Eberron is a broad topic that will be explored over the course of many future articles. This column focuses on the most common form of arcane spellcaster, the class whose existence transformed Khorvaire: the magewright.

The Meaning of "Magewright"

Arcane power is invisible and omnipresent. Ritual allows a magic user to draw on this energy and use it to reshape reality. The process of spellcasting is considerably more complicated than wiggling a finger and shouting a word. Mastering a spell requires intense mental discipline. In addition to complex gestures and incantations, a spellcaster uses thought and will to transform and shape mystical energy. A true wizard is a master of this art, able to grasp the principles behind any spell he can find or create. This level of talent is a rare gift. Still, most common folk can learn to cast one or two minor spells, if they work hard enough. While they lack the diversity or raw power of the wizard or sorcerer, these lesser spellcasters bring simple magic to the marketplace and into the world. These are the magewrights.

Just like the expert, "magewright" is a generic term encompassing dozens of professions. "Magewright" describes a character's magical skill but it tells you nothing about the actual trade she practices. A commoner seeking to learn magic wouldn't go to "magewright school." Instead, he would become an apprentice wordsmith or seek out a traveling tinker who might share the secrets of her trade.

Mystical Dabblers

The vast majority of magewrights only have a single level in the class. These are primarily commoners or experts who took a magewright level in order to learn a single useful spell. The most common choice is *magecraft,* a ritual that guides an artisan's hands and infuses his work with a touch of magic. An innkeeper might take a single level of magewright to gain access to *prestidigitation* or *unseen servant*, while a translator could take one level in the class to learn *comprehend languages*. These dabblers are not defined by their mystical knowledge; instead, they know a single trick that enhances their mundane skills.

The DM should bear this potential for magic in mind when creating scenes in an **Eberron** game, especially in a major metropolis or large town. An artisan producing masterwork materials may use *magecraft* to enhance her work, and the tailor could use *mending* for especially difficult jobs. Magic is a part of life in the Five Nations. Magewrights make up approximately 1% of the adult workforce, and their spells should be seen in action on a regular basis.

Magewright Professions

Many trades have evolved around the magewright class, combining Craft, Profession, and a handful of spells to fill a specific economic niche. A few of these are described below but they are only springboards for the DM's imagination. A player creating a bard or sorcerer should also consider these ideas when selecting spells. While your PC sorcerer is unlikely to want to be a lamplighter, do the spells you possess have a logical economic role? Might you have been trained for a mystical profession before becoming an adventurer?

All of the professions described below are based off the model of a 4th-level magewright. Many members of these professions would work for one of the Dragonmark guilds but there are also independent operators in the world, also, especially in smaller communities.

Skilled Magewright: Human magewright 4; CR 3; Medium humanoid (human); HD 4d4-4; hp 7; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +2; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (1d4-1 19-20/x2, dagger) or +2 ranged (1d4-1 19-20/x2, dagger); Full Atk +1 melee (1d4-1 19-20/x2, dagger) or +2 ranged (1d4-1 19-20/x2, dagger); AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 9, Dex 11, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 10. As a result of his Magewright levels, this character has two levels of Spell Mastery and gained 1 spell at 1st level and 2 spells at 4th level.

Augur

The augur is a professional seer. In addition to her divinatory magic, she is familiar with a variety of nonmagical traditions of divination and may use cards, runes, or the movement of the moons to foretell events from romance to the weather. While she is generally consulted about the future, she can also use her talents to identify magical objects or decipher unknown writings. Higher-level augurs may learn *arcane sight, clairvoyance/clairaudience, divination, scrying,* or *contact other plane.*

Skills and Feats: Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (history) +2, Knowledge (the planes) +9, Profession (fortune teller) +11, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +4; Skill Focus (Profession -- fortune teller), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Spell Mastery.

Spells (3/3/1): 0-level -- *detect magic*; 1st-level -- *comprehend languages, identify*; 2nd-level -- *augury*.

Cannith Tinker

The tinker is a jack-of-all-trades. He has a basic grasp of many crafts and can use his mystical powers to repair damaged items. A tinker might travel from place to place in search of work or he may settle in one small community where his talents make him invaluable. While anyone can pursue the path of the tinker, the magewrights of House Cannith dominate this trade because of the power of the mark.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +4, Craft (choose five) +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (geography) +3, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Spellcraft +4; Craft Wondrous Item, Spell Mastery, Least Dragonmark of Making (*make whole* 1/day, +2 to all Craft checks).

Spells (3/3/1): 0-level -- *mending*; 1st-level -- *magecraft*; 2nd-level -- *make whole*. Select one additional 0 or 1st-level spell because of the tinker's additional Spell Mastery feat; he will generally use this in conjunction with Craft Wondrous Item. The Least Mark power could be changed to *repair light damage* 1/day or *mending* 2/day; *repair* is common among tinkers who worked with military units during the Last War.

Hosteler

Anyone can run an inn but the spells of the hosteler make the job much easier. A hosteler can use his spells to clean clothes and rooms, to prepare food, transport items, understand guests from distant lands, repair minor damage, and create mystical locks for his doors. While most hostelers are trained by House Ghallanda and have ties to that house, Ghallanda employ people of all races, both marked and unmarked. A hosteler can be an excellent source of gossip and local information, but it may not always be reliable.

Skills and Feats: Gather Information +4; Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility) +3, Profession (brewer) +5, Profession (cook) +5, Profession (innkeeper) +8, Sense Motive +6; Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Spell Mastery (*comprehend languages*), Spell Mastery (*unseen servant*). For a Ghallanda halfling, replace Skill Focus and one Spell Mastery feat with the Least Mark of Hospitality.

Spells (3/3/1): 0-level -- *prestidigitation*; 1st-level -- *comprehend languages, unseen servant*; 2nd-level -- *arcane lock, make whole*.

Jorasco Apothecary

Between war and adventurers, there's a major market for healing potions. Apothecaries come in all shapes and sizes but those of House Jorasco are the masters of healing; without the dragonmark, an apothecary must have levels in some other spellcasting class to produce potions of healing. The apothecary represents a secular alternative to the Jorasco healer presented on page 232 of the **Eberron** *Campaign Setting*, one that relies on her dragonmark and her potions to aid those in need. If she advances further, she might take expert levels to improve her Heal skill.

Skills and Feats: Craft (alchemy) +9, Heal +6, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (local) +3, Profession (apothecary) +8, Profession (herbalist) +6; Brew Potion, Least Mark of Healing (*cure light wounds* 1/day).

Spells (3/3/1): 0-level -- *mage hand*; 1st-level -- *magecraft, unseen servant*.

(This sample apothecary is a halfling. Because of her size, the apothecary receives a +1 bonus to AC and a +1 bonus to hit, and she possesses all of the halfling racial abilities. Her small dagger inflicts only 1d3-1 points of damage.)

Lamplighter

Magical light has had a tremendous impact on the culture of the Five Nations, allowing the citizens of Khorvaire to work through the night. Lamplighters produce *everburning torches,everbright lanterns*, and other sources of light. Given the long life of an *everbright lantern*, however, a lamplighter will eventually run out of work in a small community. As a result, most lamplighters are wanderers who live lives much like those of the tinkers.

Skills and Feats: Craft (gemcutting) +8, Craft (woodworking) +7, Craft (any three) +5, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (local) +5; Craft Wondrous Item, Spell Mastery (*mending*), Spell Mastery (*prestidigitation*).

Spells (3/3/1): 0-level -- *light, mending, prestidigitation*; 1st-level -- *magecraft*; 2nd-level -- *continual flame* (this

spell has been added to the magewright spell list).

Warden

Most wardens learn their trade with House Kundarak but a few part ways with the house and work as independents. Paranoid lords occasionally hire full-time wardens to secure manors and vaults. A higher-level warden may learn *detect magic, dispel magic, false vision, fire trap, glyph of warding, symbol of pain,* or *symbol of sleep.*

Skills and Feats: Craft (locksmithing) +9, Craft (trapmaking) +12, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +6, Listen +5, Spellcraft +5, Spot +5; Alertness, Skill Focus (Craft -- trapmaking), Spell Mastery (*hold portal*). To make a dragonmarked House Kundarak warden, remove Alertness and Spell Mastery and add the Least Mark of Warding.

Spells (3/3/1): 0-level -- *detect magic*; 1st-level -- *alarm, hold portal*; 2nd-level -- *arcane lock*.

Wordsmith

Wordsmiths are professional scribes and translators. While many work for the Speakers' Guild of House Sivis, wordsmiths can be found at any of the major universities or arcane institutions of Khorvaire. Higher-level wordsmiths may know *illusory script, secret page, sending,* or *tongues.* A wordsmith who intends to serve as a mediator or advocate will probably have expert levels to enhance her Diplomacy and Sense Motive skills.

Skills and Feats: Craft (calligraphy) +9, Diplomacy +5, Profession (scribe) +8, Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (one additional language), Spellcraft +5; Negotiator, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Spell Mastery (*arcane mark*). For a dragonmarked House Sivis wordsmith, remove Skill Focus and Spell Mastery and add the Least Mark of Scribing.

Spells (3/3/1): 0-level -- *arcane mark, read magic*; 1st-level -- *comprehend languages*; 2nd-level -- *whispering wind*.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

What Do You Know

By Keith Baker

You're walking down the street when you encounter a dwarf wearing eight copper rings, one on each finger. You've read the **Eberron** *Campaign Setting*, and you immediately think, "Hey, I'll bet that guy is a member of the Aurum!"

Unfortunately, your *character* hasn't read the campaign setting book. Just because a man is wearing eight rings doesn't mean he's a member of the Aurum. There's the question of the style of the rings, the manner in which he folds his hands when he greets you. Is your character capable of reading these signs? This is the role of the Knowledge skill -- to determine the things that your character knows, regardless of whether you know it. Sometimes it can be difficult to determine where a particular fact falls.

Ultimately, the use of Knowledge skills is in the hands of the DM. You may have no problem assigning a skill and difficulty to a particular Knowledge check. If you find yourself at a loss, here are a few pointers to set you on the right path.

Geography

Chapter Seven of the **Eberron** *Campaign Setting* includes details on a variety of important cities and sites. Has your character ever heard of the Torlaac Moor or the Black Pit? For the most part, this falls under -- shocking as this may be -- Knowledge (geography).

Knowledge DC	Information about...
5	National capital or metropolis (Sharn)
10	City, major fortress, or environmental feature (The King's Forest, Sterngate)
15	Village or town, smaller fortress or feature (Black Pit, Argonth)
20	Hamlet or thorp, obscure fortress or feature (Ringbriar, The Dragon's Crown)

A successful skill check means that you can point to the location on the map and that you know basic details about it: primary industries, size, most common race among the population, form of law. More detailed information may require a higher difficulty check, as described later in this article -- or it might require Knowledge (local).

History

With Knowledge (geography) serving your geographical needs, it should come as no surprise that Knowledge (history) is the source for information about the past.

Knowledge DC	Information about...
5	The last five years
10	The Current Age
15	The Age of Monsters
20	The Age of Giants
25	The Age of Demons
30	The Age of Dragons

At the DM's discretion, a character could pick a specific era (other than the Current Age) as a specialty. The DC for checks relating to the chosen era should begin at 5, but checks concerning other eras should be bumped up by 5. For example, a scholar who specializes in the Age of Monsters needs only a DC 5 check to remember a major event, but it's a DC 10 check for him to recall a major event of the last 5 years. Needless to say, there is very little information available about the Age of Dragons or the Age of Demons; even a specialized scholar won't be able to come up with much of value.

Knowledge (history) also is useful for recognizing relics of a particular era. If the DM allows a character to specialize in an era and the character has at least 5 ranks in Knowledge (history), he can choose to forego the usual bonus to Bardic Knowledge and instead gain a +2 synergy bonus to Appraise, Forgery, and Decipher Languages checks specifically related to the specialty age.

Religion

Can you recognize the symbol of the Emerald Claw? Do you know anything about the Cults of the Dragon Below? Knowledge (religion) is the relevant skill, but each religion has its own difficulty.

Knowledge DC	Information about...
10	The Church of the Silver Flame, the Sovereign Host
15	The Blood of Vol, the Dark Six
20	The Cults of the Dragon Below, the Path of Light, the Undying Court, the Druidic sects

A character always makes checks about his own religion at a base DC of 5. In addition, a DM could choose to provide a character with a +5 bonus if his region of origin is closely linked to a particular region; someone who grew up in the Eldeen Reaches should know something about the druids even if he doesn't share their beliefs.

Organizations

The **Eberron** *Campaign Setting* provides details on 28 organizations. How much of that information should be available to a player character? What skill should be used to acquire that information?

This is not an easy question to answer. House Jorasco is a household name, and it hides few secrets. The Dreaming Dark is virtually unknown outside of the kalashtar and the Inspired, and it could be difficult to prove that the organization even exists. Between these is a wide range of groups with multiple levels of secrecy. Most people have heard of House Phiarlan, but far fewer know that it trades in information or how to properly contact a

Phiarlan intelligence broker. Many members of the upper crust know about the existence of the four concords of the Aurum but the existence of the Shadow Cabinet is a secret even to members of the concords. Consider the following when determining base difficulty.

Knowledge DC	Level of Secrecy...
5	Character is a member of the organization
10	None (most Dragonmark houses, Morgrave University)
15	Low (The Aurum, the Order of the Emerald Claw)
20	Medium (The Chamber, the Shadow Cabinet)
30	High (The Dreaming Dark, the Lords of Dust)

In this case, even choosing the appropriate skill can be difficult. Knowledge (nobility) is the default skill for obtaining information about the dragonmark houses, and it also makes sense for the Aurum, the royal families, and other groups that are centered in court. The Lords of Dust would typically fall under Knowledge (arcana) while the Dreaming Dark would come under the heading of Knowledge (psionics). If a character is a conspiracy buff, the DM might allow him to take Knowledge (organizations); 5 ranks in such a skill would provide a +2 synergy bonus to Gather Information checks when seeking information about an organization.

Knowledge (local)

Knowledge (local) is a somewhat mysterious skill. What does it mean to have "local" knowledge about the entire world? The DM can interpret this skill in several different ways, depending on how challenging he wants to make things for a player.

At the broadest, most generous end of the spectrum, Knowledge (local) can be used in any location. This represents an amazing memory for trivia and a general ability to pick up local customs and gossip subconsciously without the need for a Gather Information check.

If the DM wants to sacrifice utility in the name of realism, he can make a character choose a country to associate with the skill -- Knowledge (local/Breland).

As a compromise, the DM could allow a character to choose one country for each rank in the skill. This way, a character with five ranks in Knowledge (local) could be familiar with all of the Five Nations. Whenever she gains a new rank, she can choose a new country. Ideally, it should be a place where she's spent time recently.

Knowledge (local) is more versatile than its counterparts and may overlap with them. Knowledge (nobility) can provide general information about a dragonmark house and its international alliances but Knowledge (local) can tell you about the size of the local enclave, the name of the local baron, and his personal feud with House Kundarak. Likewise, Knowledge (nobility) or Knowledge (geography) can provide you with the name of a nation's king but Knowledge (local) is more likely to tell you about his rumored taste for virgin blood.

The DM needs to decide how to limit local knowledge. A simple, straightforward (but more restrictive) approach is to treat it as an extension of the character's other Knowledge skills. Thus, unless the character has at least one rank in Knowledge (nobility), for example, he can't use Knowledge (local) for checks specifically involving aristocrats.

Modifying Difficulty

The checks described above provide you with the difficulty for acquiring the most basic knowledge about a subject. It's only a DC 5 check to point to Sharn on a map. If you want to know the name of the Captain of the Guard in Lower Dura, that's an entirely different question. The DM should apply the following modifiers, as she sees fit.

DC Modifier	Information is...
0	Trivial (the name of a city)
+5	Slightly difficult (the name of the mayor of Sharn)
+10	Challenging (the names of all of the city councilors in Sharn)
+15	Obscure (the names of the councilors' spouses)
+20	Extremely Obscure (the names of the councilor's spouses during the reign of King Jarot)

Identifying the seal of a dragonmark house is a trivial task. Recognizing the dress clothing of a house is slightly difficult, while identifying an incognito heir's house by her facial features, style of speech, and manner of dress would be extremely obscure, if it's even possible.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Khoravar: Half-Elves of Khorvaire

By Keith Baker

"Aerenal and Sarlona met in Khorvaire, and we are the fruit of that union. We may have no kings, no countries to call our own, but we are the true children of this land."

-- Arilam d'Lyrandar, captain of the airship *Bright Wind*

Almost 2,600 years ago, the nation of Aerenal was torn apart by civil war. Tensions between the clerics of the Undying Court and the necromancers of the House of Vol had grown with each new generation, but the manifestation of the Mark of Death and the discovery of half-dragons within the House of Vol were enough to set a spark to the bonfire. Soon the dragons of Argonnessen joined the fray, and when the conflict had settled, the line of Vol was no more.

The Aereni had engaged in many battles against the dragons but this was the first civil war in the nation's history, and it left deep scars on the psyche of the elves. In the aftermath of the conflict, a number of elves chose to leave Aerenal to seek a new future in the land of Khorvaire. The elves of House Phiarlan led this exodus; while the Sibling Kings and the Undying Court had taken no action against the Mark of Shadow, the destruction of the Mark of Death was unsettling. Most of the immigrants felt that an unspoken promise had been broken by the civil war and that the elven blood spilled on the soil of Aerenal forever tainted the land.

As the elves of House Phiarlan and the other scions of Aerenal spread across Khorvaire, they encountered the current occupants of the land: humans whose ancestors had traveled from Sarlona in search of riches and opportunity. The humans were fascinated by the elves. Many coveted the fey beauty and arcane secrets of the travelers, and many of the vagabond elves married into human guilds and noble families. Most elves saw this as a long-term investment. The elves were accustomed to looking centuries ahead, and having learned of the short human lifespan, an elven spouse had an excellent chance of inheriting control of family resources. Few elves imagined that they could conceive a child with a human until the first half-elves were born.

The Children of Khorvaire

Those elves that mingled with humans had typically married into privileged families, so that the first generation of half-elves was born with power and influence. For the most part, human parents were overjoyed with their unusual children, while elves saw the half-elves as pale reflections and mockeries of their ancestors. Many of the elves chose to back away from their human alliances and withdraw to the enclaves of House Phiarlan. If not for this desire to preserve their racial heritage, it is likely that the elves would have far greater influence across the modern nations of Khorvaire. Even as the true elves pulled back, the young half-elves spread across Khorvaire, embracing its many wonders. While they were bound to different houses and bloodlines, the majority felt a strong bond to other half-elves. Most sought to marry other half-elves, in the process forming new and stronger alliances between their families and guilds; this stability helped to lay the foundations of the Five Nations.

While most half-elves remained among their human ancestors, they clung to the language and some of the traditions of the distant elves. As their numbers grew and their blood ties to the elves grew more distant, they

developed their own traditions, eventually coming to seek a name beyond "half-elf." The most common is *Khoravar*. Like Valenar, this word is both an adjective and a noun; one can refer to "a Khoravar airship" or "that silver-tongued Khoravar."

Over the course of centuries, the Khoravar grew in number and spread across the land. Most maintained close ties to their human kin but a few split off to form isolated half-elven communities. These seeds would grow into the Greensingers of the Eldeen Reaches and the Gray Sails of the Lhazaar Principalities. The turning point for the Khoravar was the appearance of the half-elven dragonmarks: the Mark of Storm in Thrane, followed by the Mark of Detection in Breland. In the wake of the War of the Mark and the foundation of Galifar, these houses gave the half-elves a focus for racial pride.

Today, the majority of the Khoravar are attached to House Medani or House Lyrandar. Some remain spread throughout the noble families and guilds of Khorvaire. These half-elves are often called upon to serve as ambassadors and emissaries to Aerenal and Valenar. To date, the full-blooded elves have ruled that a Khoravar cannot join the Undying Court or embody one of the ancestors of the Valenar; the elves acknowledge, however, that the Khoravar blood is stronger than that of the human, and in time a dedicated half-elf may break through this prejudice.

Half-Elven Blood

The genetics of the Khoravar are unusual. Many alchemists and sages are amazed that it is possible for humans and elves to interbreed at all. When a human and half-elf conceive, the resulting child has an equal chance to have the race of either parent. In all other cases -- human and elf, half-elf and half-elf, and elf and half-elf -- the result is always the same: a half-elf child. The Aereni claim that this is not a matter of physiology or genetics, but of magic; the blood of the elves holds the light of ancient Xen'drik, and once diluted it can never be regained. Whether this is true is a matter for each DM to decide.

Khoravar Customs

Half-elves are highly adaptable, drawing on the culture of their families and the nations that they inhabit. Each of the Khoravar dragonmark houses has its own traditions, which will be explored further in the future. A few common customs bind most half-elves together. If you are playing a half-elf character or portraying a half-elf NPC, you must decide whether to make use of these traditions.

Khoravar Cant. If a half-elf is raised by Khoravar parents, he will learn to speak both Common and Elvish. Each new generation of half-elves has a greater tendency to mingle the vocabulary of both languages, creating a pidgin dialect that some linguists refer to as Khoravar Cant. Any half-elf can understand this dialect perfectly. Any other character must make an Intelligence check to understand a phrase in Khoravar Cant (DC 5 if the listener understands both Common and Elvish, or DC 10 if he only knows one of the two languages). If the listener fails the check by a point or two, he may get the gist of the conversation; the worse the roll, the less he understands.

Half-Elven Hospitality. The Khoravar are a young race, and they have had to stand by one another to earn a place in Khorvaire. As a result, there is a strong tradition of hospitality and generosity toward others of the race. This is not as strong as the bond between the gnome families of Zilargo, and a half-elf need not put himself at physical or financial risk for a complete stranger. In comparison to the other races, however, half-elves will go out of their way to help one another and share news and information. This is a two-way street. If the PC develops a reputation as an adventurer or hero, other half-elves may ask for his assistance or advice. If he provides aid, his reputation will spread; if he turns down these requests, he may eventually find himself spurned by others of his

kind.

Within a city or town, half-elves often have weekly gatherings (called *unity meals*) to discuss local news and events. Provided a PC has a good reputation, such a gathering would be an excellent place to learn information. At the DM's discretion, attending a unity meal can provide a character with a bonus to Gather Information or Knowledge (local) or allow the party to find a reliable hireling at a good rate. It can also be a place to learn about possible adventures or mysteries.

The Bridge Between. Many half-elves extend the principle of hospitality a step further, seeking to serve as a bridge between the different cultures of Khorvaire. Many become bards, barristers, diplomats, chroniclers, translators, or merchants. Others become explorers, hoping to discover new nations hidden in the depths of Xen'drik or Khyber.

Questions to Ask

When you create a half-elf PC or NPC, consider the following.

- The Khoravar have a history stretching back to the birth of the race. Were you born into this community or are you a "newborn" -- that is, were your parents half-elves or are you the child of a human and an elf? If you are a newborn, do you want to become a part of the half-elf community or do you want to find your own way in the world?
- Do you have ties to House Medani or House Lyrandar? Because of the age of the race, many Khoravar can trace their roots to one of the families, and even those with no direct tie often choose to ally themselves to one of the houses. This could be reflected by a dragonmark feat or the Favored in House feat, or it could simply be a point of backstory.
- Which tradition do you follow? Are you interested in meeting others and strengthening relations between those around you or do you save your energy for your close friends and family?
- Do you have any interest in your elvish heritage? Do you want to learn the ways of the Aereni or Valenar? Do you hope to join the Undying Court or channel a Valenar ancestor?
- How large is your family? What about the other half-elves in your region? Do you have ties to the local community or are you a loner?

These are notions for consideration, nothing more. Keep them in mind when fashioning your character, but above all, build the character you want to play!

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

Dragonshards
The Serens, Part One
(Cultures of Eberron)

By Keith Baker

Red Kharizhak faced Delhasha the Cold across the obsidian altar as the screams of dying men echoed across the plain. Kharizhak licked the blood off the tip of his ancestral blade.

"The blood of the White Wanderers is sweet," he hissed. "I shall drink my fill as your tribe dies in fire."

Delhasha's pale eyes glittered behind the mask of white scales. Her voice was cool and calm. "You have been blinded by your flames, Kharizhak. It is the Selhastorh'ak who face final judgment, and yours will be a cold death."

Kharizhak laughed, lowering his blade to Delhasha's chest. "I see no weapon in your hands, dragonspeaker. Will you grow claws and tear me apart?"

"You will fall this night," Delhasha replied. "But it is not my *claws you should fear." She opened her hand, revealing a wyrmling's tooth engraved with draconic runes.*

Kharizhak cried out in fear and rage but the sound was drowned out by the roar of the white dragon as she dived down from the moonless sky.

Heart and History

A traveler passing through Q'barra or the Lhazaar Principalities is sure to hear tales of the tribes of the Seren Islands. These fierce barbarians guard the coast of Argonnessen, and it is said that the waters of Totem Beach run red from the blood of their victims. In song and story, the Serens are typically cast as horrible monsters -- firebreathing warriors who consume the flesh of their still-living foes and sacrifice children to their draconic gods.

These stories are much exaggerated. The Serens are fierce warriors who will give their lives to defend the shores of Argonnessen from outsiders but they are not cannibals, and their reverence for dragons is more complex than simple awe of the mighty beasts.

Approximately thirty Seren tribes are scattered across the islands and the coastline of Argonnessen. Every tribe has a legend of a draconic covenant: a tale of how their ancestors were brought from a distant land by a mighty dragon and charged to honor the dragon and defend the land from the weak and unworthy. The dragonspeaker priests say that the dragons are the embodiment of all that is best in the human spirit. When a Seren dies, his soul is judged, and if he has upheld the covenant, he is placed in the shell of a dragon's egg. When enough worthy souls are brought together in the egg, it hatches and a new dragon is born, distilled from the essence of all the noble souls that went before.

The Seren islands are harsh and unforgiving, and the tribes exist in continuous conflict. The first recorded

contact with the Serens comes from a Sarlonan account from -3,120. The civilization has changed very little over the millennia; the Serens are devoted to their traditions. Until the dragons themselves order a change, the Serens will continue to uphold the covenants. Any traveler who wishes to explore the land of the dragons will have to deal with these barbarians.

National Character

Each Seren tribe is defined by its draconic covenant. When creating a Seren tribe, a DM needs to answer the following questions:

- What color was the draconic founder? Look to appearance, breath weapon, and elemental ties for things that the Seren tribe will use for inspiration. Traditionally tribes of the same color frequently act as allies despite different alignments and beliefs.
- What alignment was the founder? In Eberron, alignment and draconic color are not automatically linked.
- The Serens are charged to protect Argonessen from the unworthy and to honor the founder. This is a vague directive. What were the specific words of the founder? What does this tribe consider unworthy and how do they honor the founder? Because the Serens consider upholding the covenant to be their key to the afterlife, this is a major point. A violent, chaotic tribe could believe that they honor their founder by spilling the blood of anyone weaker than themselves. A more peaceful tribe could believe that they honor the founder by amassing knowledge or treasures.
- In addition to the general vow to protect Argonnessen, some of the tribes have specific, additional charges -- protecting a specific shrine or guarding a particular piece of treasure, for example.

Seren culture is very warlike, and the Serens repel any invaders. Because of this, the people of Khorvaire and Sarlona have learned to avoid Argonnessen, leaving the Serens to spend most of their time fighting each other. Through these battles the Serens hone their skills and prove their worth as guardians. Only the strongest have a place on the shores of Argonessen. Children and caregivers are generally spared during raids, allowing tribes to eventually recover from defeat.

Most of the Seren tribes have a similar social structure. The warlord is the mightiest warrior. This position is based purely on skill, and any member of the tribe can challenge a warlord. The warlord oversees all military action: patrolling the land, organizing raids, training young soldiers. A council of dragonspeakers, mystics who use wisdom and magic to guide the tribe, oversees spiritual and domestic matters. Dragonspeaker is a lifelong post with authority within the council based on age. Despite the warlike nature of the Serens, dragonspeakers hold final authority and can overrule a warlord's decisions or even force a warlord to step down from his position.

Gender roles vary by tribe and are often depend on the gender of the founding dragon. In many tribes, female warriors (barbarians) are just as common as men, while in other tribes women become spiritual leaders or are allowed only domestic roles.

Appearance

The Serens claim that the dragons brought them from many lands, and their appearance backs this up. All manner of skin and hair color can be found among the Serens, though there is a tendency toward dark complexions and heavy builds. Tattooing is a common practice on the islands; as Seren warriors win victories in

battle, they earn the right to have draconic features tattooed across their bodies.

Seren culture is primitive. Warriors typically wear hide or leather armor. Some rely on dragonscale tattoos in place of physical armor. Weapons are made from wood, bone, or shell. Each tribe, however, possesses heirloom arms and armor handed down from the draconic founders. These can be both traditional items from the dragons' hoards and dragonscale armor or weapons made from dragon bones or claws.

Away from the battlefield, most Serens wear simple, gray clothing. As Serens rise in influence and reputation, they are allowed to wear clothing and accessories matching the color of the draconic founder. Dragon scale and dragon bone ornaments are reserved for the greatest heroes of the tribe. Such treasures are not passed to descendents upon the owner's death but rather returned to the tribe to be awarded to the next hero who proves worthy.

Language and Names

The Serens speak Draconic as opposed to Common. A Seren may take Common as a bonus language or learn Common by spending a single skill point.

Seren names are also based on the Draconic language. They do not use family names, instead earning titles and honorifics tied to the draconic founder, such as Delhasha'alhasc ("Delhasha the Cold").

Typical Male Names: Durshast, Kharizhak, Lhasharak, Nolashar, Solashan, Xaxhan

Typical Female Names: Aralithyr, Delhasha, Eshka, Freilashka, Hakalasha, Shaesthyr

Character Classes

Serens are raised to be as fierce in battle as the dragons that they revere. The harsh life of the islands lends strength to those who survive it. Most adult Serens have at least one barbarian class level. A few clans with martial traditions mingle barbarian with ranger or monk but these are rare (and respected).

The dragons taught the druidic secrets to humanity, and most dragonspeakers are druids following the traditions of the Gatekeepers or Wardens of the Woods. A few tribes have a bardic tradition, and sorcerers can also be found among the Serens. Sorcerers typically develop powers related to the tribal founder (fire spells for a red sorcerer, for example). While sorcerers are usually considered blessed, a sorcerer who develops spells that seem out of line with the tribal founder -- e.g., fire spells for the tribe of a white dragon -- might be driven from the tribe.

Dracolytes, Dragonsong Lyricists, and Dragon Disciples can also be found among the Serens, and the members of their tribes idolize them. Such individuals, however, are often called to serve dragons themselves and disappear into the center of Argonnessen.

Seren Adventurers

It is unusual for a Seren to leave the islands and shores of Argonessen. When creating a traveling Seren PC or NPC, you should decide why he left his homeland. Consider the following ideas.

- A dragonspeaker -- possibly a member of the Chamber in disguise -- claims that the character must wander the world to fulfill a prophecy and find her destiny.
- The gatekeepers have charged the character to travel to the Land of Demons (Khorvaire) to fight the plans of the Lords of Dust and the Cults of the Dragon Below.
- The character was banished for stealing relics from a sacred shrine. She is innocent but the only way to prove this is to locate the artifacts, wherever they might be!
- A treacherous feud within the tribe resulted in the death of all other members of the character's family. He swore to find powerful allies and return to destroy his enemies and claim leadership of the tribe.

Sample Seren Tribes

Approximately thirty barbarian tribes are spread among the Seren Islands and the coast of Argonnessen. A few representative tribes are described below.

The **Bringers of Fire** were founded by a chaotic evil red dragon. One of the largest and most dangerous tribes, they are one of the only tribes known to completely exterminate Seren clans that they view as unworthy. The Bringers of Fire paint their skin red before battle and make use of flaming oil. They are renowned for their volatile temperaments.

The **White Wanderers** were founded by a true neutral white dragon. They are a nomadic tribe charged to protect a series of shrines. They believe in the power of knowledge and magic, and have a high percentage of literacy and dragonspeakers. Explorers and outsiders looking for Serens to deal with would do well to focus on this tribe. White Wanderers have a cold, chilly demeanor, and never let their emotions show.

The **Stormwalkers** were founded by a lawful evil blue dragon. Although one of the smallest tribes, they are nonetheless dangerous and thus, highly respected. The Stormwalkers developed a martial, monastic tradition emulating the natural attacks of the dragon, and the greatest masters of this art can follow the Initiate of the Draconic Mysteries prestige class presented in the *Draconomicon.*

The **Frostblades** were founded by a lawful good white dragon. While they ruthlessly defend the land from outsiders, they also seek to preserve weaker tribes from the depredations of more violent clans such as the Bringers of Fire. Frostblade dragonspeakers know the secret of alchemist's frost and sometimes use this as a weapon in battle.

The **Totem Guardians** are not a tribe. Rather, they are an alliance of elite soldiers drawn from many tribes. These are the defenders of Totem Beach and the Great Barrier of Argonnessen. Their recruits are drawn from the dreams of dragonspeaker priests who receive dream-visions ordering particular warriors to Totem Beach to join the guardians. In a few special cases, dragons have personally visited a tribe to call a Seren to the guardians. A Totem Guardian possesses at least six character levels and may possess levels in the Dracolyte, Dragonkith, or Dragonrider prestige classes presented in the *Draconomicon.*

About the Author

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Dragonshards

Shulassakar: The Feathered Servants

By Keith Baker

The windows were shuttered against the sun, and the room was shrouded in shadow. Daine could barely see the figure in the corner of the library. The tall, slender stranger was wrapped in a cloak, its deep cowl pulled down over her features.

"You have seen the evil lurking in this place." Her voice was a sibilant whisper, low but clear. "Its power increases with every soul it corrupts. I cannot move among the people to find the fiend Kazalak. You must follow the trail of Kazalak's poisoned touch, battle those consumed by the darkness, and find this font of horror. You are human, warm and weak, and you cannot stand against Kazalak alone. Together, perhaps we can stop this ancient evil before it spreads beyond this village."

Daine scowled. "So we corner a demon and hope you'll show up to save the day? That's a plan, all right. Why should I believe you can stop this thing?"

"I cannot defeat Kazalak."

"Oh. Great."

"I am a vessel for the force that will save us all, a force beyond your comprehension."

Dalassa stepped forward and threw back her cloak. Beneath the shadoweave, she wore a robe that seemed to be formed from pure white fire. This flared up to fill the room with light and illuminate a serpent's head covered with a rainbow of brilliant plumage. The feathers rose up around her, seeming to glow with inner fire.

"I am Dalassakash'alyntar, servant of the flame that binds, the light that will not die. Kazalak escaped his bonds but as long as the flame flows within me, he shall fall at my hand."

In the dawn of this world, the first children of Khyber rose from the darkness to dominate the lands of Eberron. For a time it seemed that no force could stand against the horrors of Khyber. It took an alliance between the mighty dragons and the noble couatl to challenge the spawn of Khyber, and this conflict shook the foundations of the world. It was a war beyond mortal understanding, a struggle that is said to have lasted for a million years. Some say the echoes of the war can still be heard in the plane of Shavarath. To break the stalemate, the couatl made the ultimate sacrifice; they combined the souls of their race into a spiritual force, a silver flame that could bind even the greatest of fiends.

The Ruins of Krezent

The couatl were born on the continent of Sarlona. The majority of their ancient ruins lie hidden in the realm of the Inspired. As they fought the fiends, they established outposts across the length of Eberron. The greatest of these was the fortress-citadel of Krezent, located in the heart of what is now the Talenta Plains. The city extends down

into the depths of Khyber, and by the end of the war, terrible forces had been bound in its foundations. A handful of couatl remained to watch over the world but they were too few to guard every seal, so they sought out helpers among the younger races. According to legends, a small group of loyal humans from Sarlona dedicated their lives to the service of the couatl. Over the course of thousands of years, this devotion changed them in body and soul. By the time the Empire of Dhakaan rose to power, the guardians of Krezent were no longer human. They had become shulassakar -- the feathered servants.

Children of the Silver Flame

The people of Krezent are a wondrous sight: humans blended with couatl, with serpentine features and feathers that glow with an inner light. The shulassakar are dedicated servants of the Silver Flame and will give their lives without a moment's thought to combat the forces of darkness.

If these serpent guardians are so noble and wise, why do the halflings fear them? Why do the tribes of the Talenta Plains avoid the ruins of Krezent and whisper tales of the serpentfolk on moonless nights?

The Silver Flame is a force for good but its followers are often blinded by its light, and the shulassakar are no exception. They fight against darkness with ruthless efficiency and will make *any sacrifice necessary* for the greater good, including the lives of innocents. No one can jeopardize the seals of Krezent. The shulassakar seek to repel outsiders peacefully before they venture too deeply into the ruins but those who persist are dealt with swiftly and harshly.

The shulassakar have considerable racial pride. The feathered servants do not believe that any other creature can truly touch the light of the couatl. The Church of the Silver Flame, the Keeper of the Flame -- these are inherently flawed. While they may mean well, they are tampering with forces they do not understand. A shulassakar is more inclined to work with a follower of the Flame than with any other creature but she will still treat the character as an underling or a child. As far as she is concerned, the physical form of the shulassakar is proof of spiritual superiority.

The shulassakar consider their serpentine characteristics to be a blessing and a sign of their bond with the couatl. They believe that a shulassakar goes through cycles of reincarnation and that the three different forms of shulassakar represent this spiritual growth. Thus, when referring to themselves, the shulassakar refer to purebloods as "servants," halfbloods as "flametouched," and abominations as "transcendent."

Fighting the Darkness

The shulassakar devote their energy to guarding Krezent and other couatl ruins scattered across Eberron. They are aware of the rising darkness -- the Lords of Dust that have escaped from their bonds, the Cults of the Dragon Below, the lurking threat of the Dreaming Dark. The shulassakar face these forces directly when possible. A handful of shulassakar bloodsworn (purebloods) have hidden themselves among humanity, watching for signs of the rising darkness. A shulassakar always prefers to solve a problem on its own or to call in a more powerful servant to handle the problem. At the same time, the shulassakar recognize that victory is more important than pride.

A shulassakar may approach adventurers openly, especially if one or more members of the party follow the Silver Flame. Because shulassakar have little respect for the young races, however, it is more likely that one will attempt to manipulate or trick a party into serving its purposes, believing that humans cannot be trusted to do the right thing simply because it is right.

If a character earns the respect of the shulassakar, they can be valuable allies. Aside from the vast knowledge they possess, they have access to treasures from the Age of Dragons and the wisdom of the couatl. It is possible that a shulassakar mystic could teach new spells to a cleric or paladin of the Silver Flame, showing ways to channel the flame that humanity has never discovered. The shulassakar also have a close bond with the remaining couatl, and noble shulassakar may be able to channel one of these celestials. A human who earns the trust of a feathered servant may also earn the favor of its couatl patron, which could allow him to channel the serpent himself!

The Shulassakar and the Yuan-Ti

Physically, the shulassakar are similar to the yuan-ti. There is one major difference between the two races: where the shulassakar have serpentine characteristics, their scales are hidden beneath brilliantly colored feathers. The mightiest of the shulassakar also possess powerful wings. Bloodsworn shulassakar do not have feathers but often possess colorful markings on their skin. These are easily mistaken for tattoos but they are magical in nature and can shift color and shape in response to the mood of the bearer. The extent of these markings varies from shulassakar to shulassakar, and generally they will not prevent the pureblood from disguising itself as human.

Despite their physical similarities, shulassakar and yuan-ti cultures have little in common. The shulassakar claim that the ancestors of the yuan-ti were chosen of the couatl who broke their vows to the flame and who have since slipped into decadence. As a result, the shulassakar despise the yuan-ti. If the yuan-ti shared these legends, they abandoned them long ago, and they have no interest in the shulassakar. Driven from Sarlona by the Inspired, the yuan-ti lurk in the shadows of Xen'drik and the shores of Argonnessen, plotting vengeance against the Lords of Riedra and searching for ways to use the Draconic Prophecy to gain power.

Using the Shulassakar

When dealing with the shulassakar, bear in mind that they are highly intelligent and devoted to the cause of good, but also proud, arrogant, and ruthless. They will give up their own lives for the flame and have no compunctions about sacrificing the lives of humans or other lesser creatures. Shulassakar seek to maintain an aura of serenity at all times; the only emotion they reveal is cold, focused fury against the forces of darkness.

Shulassakar should be treated as yuan-ti, with the following modifications.

- The culture of the shulassakar tends to produce people of lawful good alignment. A shulassakar who turns to evil will be outcast and hunted by the others.
- All transcendent shulassakar (abominations) possess wings and can fly at a speed of 60 ft (good).
- Flametouched shulassakar (halfbloods) who roll 21-40 on the variant table possess wings and can fly at a speed of 60 ft (good). For a winged shulassakar to wear armor, it needs to be specially designed to accommodate the wings.
- All shulassakar are proficient in the use of the longbow and composite longbow, the favored weapons of the Silver Flame.
- All shulassakar receive Knightly Training as a bonus feat, allowing a shulassakar to multiclass as a

paladin without penalty. Bloodsworn shulassakar (purebloods) are generally ranger/paladins. A shulassakar paladin can take the Ranged Smite feat in order to channel their power through their bows.

- The favored class for a bloodsworn shulassakar is ranger. The favored class for flametouched and transcendent shulassakar is cleric. Virtually all shulassakar worship the Silver Flame, and skilled shulassakar may take levels in the Exorcist of the Silver Flame prestige class.

What Do You Know?

Most people have never heard of the shulassakar. The following skill checks indicate what a character may have heard.

Knowledge (dungeoneering) (DC 15) or **bardic knowledge** (DC 15): The character has heard of the yuan-ti, deadly serpentfolk said to live in Xen'drik. He recognizes the shulassakar as being similar to the yuan-ti, but has not heard of the subculture.

Knowledge (geography) (DC 25): The character has heard tales of Krezent, a ruined city inhabited by serpentfolk, but knows nothing of their beliefs or abilities. A character from the Talenta Plains receives a +5 bonus to this check.

Knowledge (religion) (DC 25) or **bardic knowledge** (DC 30): The character has heard specific tales of the shulassakar, a sect of serpent folk who revere the couatl and the Silver Flame. He knows that there are exorcists and paladins among the shulassakar and has a general sense of their abilities. A follower of the Silver Flame receives a +5 bonus to this check.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

Shulassakar: Welcome to Sharn!

By Keith Baker

Sharn, the City of Towers, the jewel of old Galifar -- Our glorious metropolis is known by many names, and its legend stretches across the globe. Every day thousands of people pass through Sharn. Merchants from distant lands offer Sarlonan silks, Zil elixirs, dragon turtle meat from the Sea of Rage, and other fantastic goods. Brelish farmers stream down the Old Road bearing the harvest; Sharn has many mouths to feed, and the edge of the Dagger is barren and hard. Ambassadors rub shoulders with aristocrats, and dragonmark heirs trade tales with sages and bold explorers. There is a place for everyone in the city of Sharn, and adventure lies around every corner.

Our great city can overwhelm on a first visit, so the Sharn Inquisitive produced this simple guide. With it, a good map, and a copy of the Sharn Inquisitive to keep you up to date with current events, you'll be working the lifts as if you were born in the spires! Read on, and welcome to Sharn!

Getting Oriented

Sharn sprawls between the Dagger and the Hilt. Its fabled towers rise more than a mile into the air. To find your way around the city, you must think both horizontally and vertically. If you were to look down upon the city from above, you would be able to identify five distinct sections or *quarters*: the Central Plateau, Dura, Menthis Plateau, Northedge, and Tavick's Landing.

Vertically, these clusters of towers are broken into three distinct levels or *wards*. Thus a citizen of Sharn may refer to Upper Central, Middle Dura, or Lower Northedge.

Each ward is further divided into three to nine *districts*. Each district has its own flavor. The Bazaar of Middle Dura is a center for trade; Black Arch in Lower Tavick's Landing is a garrison district supporting our brave troops and officers of the watch; and Crystal Bridge in Upper Northedge is a purely residential district, home to some of the wealthiest families in Sharn.

In addition to the five quarters, there are other regions of note. If you arrived by boat you will have already seen *Cliffside*, which rises up from the shores of the Dagger to the ward of Lower Dura. If you're reading this in Cliffside, we advise you to leave quickly, because that grimy district can be quite dangerous if you don't know the ways of the city! Looking up, you may catch a glimpse of glittering clouds floating above the tallest spires: this is *Skyway*, home to the most privileged citizens of Sharn. Deep beneath the city lie *the Cogs*, our center of industry; like Cliffside, this is a place casual visitors are advised to avoid.

Transportation

Now that you understand the basic layout of Sharn, let's discuss the many ways to get where you want to go. You can always rely on your feet but walking from Wroann's Gate to Hope's Peak would take hours, and the climb far up into the sky is exhausting. If you wish to relax and you aren't in a hurry, House Orien maintains a

network of mule-wagons that travel established routes throughout the city; a mule-cart takes time to reach your destination but the carts are comfortable and affordable.

If you have coin to spare, the swiftest method of travel is one of the wonders of Sharn: the skycoach. Magical energy flows through the very air surrounding our city, allowing these vessels to soar through the sky with the ease of a Lyrandar airship. The City Council has fixed the price of transport at one silver per mile; don't let a cunning coachman charge more than he should!

Things to See

Whether you're here for business or pleasure, Sharn has much to offer.

- **Shopping** -- Our open markets are famous throughout the region and will serve you well whether you're buying or selling. If money is in short supply, you would be advised to go to the Bazaar of Middle Dura. You may hear rumors that the Bazaar is a hotbed of criminal activity; these are blown out of proportion (but it's always wise to watch your purse). Tavick's Market and North Market provide security and a greater range of goods, while Tradefair in Middle Central offers an impressive selection of the finest goods from across the land. Beyond the open markets are hundreds of specialized shops and services spread throughout the city; sadly, we cannot present them all in this limited space.

- **Worship --** The district of Sovereign Towers is home to two of the largest temples in Breland: the Pavilion of the Host and the Cathedral of the Cleansing Flame. On festivals and holy days, Sovereign Towers is a center of celebration and devotion. Among the many shrines spread throughout the city are a few sacred sites that bring pilgrims from across Khorvaire: the Great Hall of Aureon, the Korranath, and deep below the city, the Pool of Onatar's Tears.

- **Entertainment --** From the theaters of Tavick's Landing to the aerial sports of Dura, Sharn hosts many splendid events to sample. You can watch the windchasers from the spires of Hareth's Folly, enjoy a night of bawdy comedy in Torchfire or a traditional concert in Kavarrah, or venture to Cornerstone to watch a deadly hrazhak match. From drama and athletics to intimate companionship, Sharn has entertainments to please even the most jaded palates.

- **Dining --** Speaking of palates, culinary marvels can be found on every corner. A few are truly worthy of mention. For those with plenty of coin, nothing can compare to a meal at the Celestial Vista, gazing down at the towers from the clouds of Skyway. The Oaks in Shae Lias serves both Brelish and Aereni cuisine, and the master chef has spent centuries perfecting her skills. If money is limited, Olladra's Arms in High Hope specializes in banquet-style dining, serving generous portions to anyone who can find a seat around one of the long tables.

This is but a taste of what Sharn has to offer. Floating orchards, dream parlors, and greater wonders await you. You might mingle with heirs and ambassadors in Central Plateau, enroll at Morgrave University, or find loyal comrades in one of the many guilds of the city. Should you possess the skills and backing, you might try your luck in the Race of Eight Winds. The opportunities in Sharn could fill a book: go forth and explore!

What to Avoid

Every city has its darker side, and Sharn is no exception. Clifftop, Lower Dura, the Cogs -- all of these places can

be dangerous for a wandering tourist, especially one laden with gold. If possible, avoid these areas completely; under no circumstances should you allow anyone to take you to the goblinoid settlements of Dura or the subterranean district known as Khyber's Gate. While these places have never been safe, there has been a considerable increase in violence over the last few years; our investigations suggest that a group of immigrants from Droaam have upset the balance of power in the criminal underworld, and this violence often spills into the lower wards.

These beasts are not the only source of violence. In the wake of the Last War, our Lord Mayor graciously allowed many refugees to take residence in the lower wards, and old wounds sometimes rise to the surface, causing riot and bloodshed.

Many tourists are intrigued by the idea of seeing the wreckage of the Glass Tower but we must advise against it. The district of Godsgate was in decline before the disaster, and after the Glass Tower fell in 918 YK, Godsgate was left in ruins. Today it is known as Fallen, and it is a place best left alone.

Some adventuresome souls are intrigued by tales of ancient goblin ruins deep beneath the city, rumored to reach all the way into Khyber. Do not seek out the past! These ruins were sealed off long ago to prevent the unwise from releasing buried horrors or triggering ancient traps. While they still draw foolhardy adventurers and treasure hunters, we hope that you will be wise enough to avoid this glittering lure.

Finally, we urge you to turn away anyone who encourages the use of dreamlily, absentia, dragon's blood, or other mysterious substances. Aside from the obvious dangers of dealing with criminals, these elixirs and others of their ilk can have dangerous effects on those who partake. The wise traveler will keep his hands clean and his head clear.

A Final Word

We have spoken of the many wonders and dangers of Sharn. In both instances, we have barely scratched the surface of what awaits you. Sharn is filled with beauty but, just as a rose has its thorns, the city holds hidden threats for the unwary. Enjoy yourself but exercise caution. Don't trust too easily, and be careful whom you anger; even the most innocent-seeming person may have powerful allies. A casual insult could result in a swift trip to the bottom of the Dagger.

Now, call for a skycoach and make your way into the clouds. Treat yourself to a meal at the Celestial Vista, then catch the latest show at the Grand Stage. Sharn awaits!

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Elves of Valenar, Part 1

By Keith Baker

The Darguul warlord studied Caerys, slowly spinning the chain of his flail. "What could bring you to this place, elf?" His tribe gathered around them, forming a wide circle of shadows and gleaming red eyes.

Caerys held her double blade in the falcon guard, level with her shoulders and spreading out like wings. "I came in search of legends. Ten thousand years ago Daealyth of Taeri stood this ground and faced your ancestors, and twenty fell before his singing blades. You are no Dhakaani of old, and a mere twenty of you will bring no honor to the Taeri."

The warlord hissed in fury, and his flail flashed in the firelight. The chain wrapped around Caerys' blade but she twisted away. The flail flew into the darkness. She spun forward, her double blade weaving a circle of fire as she danced toward the chieftain. In a moment the song of steel was over.

Caerys watched as the warlord fell to the ground. With a contemptuous snap of her wrist, she flicked the blood from her blade into the eyes of the stunned onlookers. She smiled behind her spirit veil, counting the blades arrayed against her.

"But forty will."

Heart and History

Born in the land of Xen'drik, the elves learned the ways of civilization and magic as slaves of the giants. Ultimately Xen'drik collapsed in an apocalypse of dragon fire, giant magic, and elven steel. The creatures remaining on the continent were reduced to savagery. During the final days of Xen'drik, a visionary foresaw the fate of the doomed realm. On the eve of destruction, she led a few thousand elves across the sea.

Those elves found a home on the island of Aerenal. While the elves came from different cultures, they were united by their reverence for their ancestors and the heroic deeds of those fallen in Xen'drik. The majority of the settlers chose to lay down the sword in favor of the book. They studied the art of magic, plumbing the depth of the arcane and the divine in their search for a way to preserve their heroes. Over the course of twelve thousand years, this effort produced the Undying Court and the Aereni.

Until the Last War, few humans knew of the other culture of Aerenal: The Tairnadal, "proud warriors." When news reached Aerenal of the destruction wrought by the dragons and the downfall of their ancient enemies, the Tairnadal refused to lay down their weapons. Some cursed the dragons for stealing their rightful victory while others blamed the wyrms of Argonnessen for the deaths of elves left behind. While the Aereni sought a way to overcome death, Tairnadal priests declared that the spirits of departed heroes continued to live on through their descendents -- and that the warrior who gains glory in battle serves as an avatar for the heroes of the past.

In -25,000 YK, the dragons came to Aerenal. Once again all elves joined together against a common foe. The conflict between Argonnessen and Aerenal was a fascinating and mysterious struggle but it is a subject far too

deep for this current work. To the human eye, this war continued at a snail's pace, with centuries passing between battles. Slowly the emphasis shifted from physical conflict to magical warfare, with the greatest burden falling on the Undying Court itself. Temporarily freed from battle, the Tairnadal looked elsewhere for glory. Their eyes settled on Khorvaire.

In -10,000 YK, Cassael Vadallia led a troop of warriors to the southern coast of Khorvaire, where the Tairnadal established a presence on the continent. These elves called themselves the Valaes Tairn, "warriors of glory." As the elves spread across the southwest, they came into contact with the goblinoid empire of Dhakaan. Isolated skirmishes soon turned to war. The Valaes Tairn were peerless warriors but the Dhakaani had excellent discipline and greater numbers.

At the height of the Dhakaani-Tairn War, the dragons struck Aerenal with greater force than ever. The elves rushed to the defense of their homeland, and the goblins seized the fortresses left behind. The conflict that followed was long and terrible, made worse when the Dhakaani launched attacks against Aerenal. The elves could not afford to fight two foes. The leaders of the Tairnadal met with the Dhakaani, and a treaty was signed; the elves swore never to return to Khorvaire unless called upon for aid.

They stood by their word. The Dhakaani were too proud to ask for assistance during the Daelkyr incursion, and even when the empire collapsed into ruin the Tairnadal remained on their island. For thousands of years the Valaes Tairn rebuilt their numbers and honed their skills -- until 914 YK, when a summons finally came.

The call came from Queen Mishann of Cyre. The Last War was well underway, and the Cyrans were under attack from all sides. Intrigued by the queen's plea, war leader Shaeras Vadallia summoned the clans of the Valaes Tairn. The warriors agreed that it was time to return.

For 42 years the Valaes Tairn spread terror across Breland and Karrnath. Then they broke all ties with Cyre. Some say that the young Queen Mishala insulted Vadallia, while others believe that the war leader simply grew tired of the alliance. Vadallia summoned his forces to the southwestern edge of Cyre. He spoke of the ancient claim of the elves, a bond to the land older than human civilization. As a darkwood crown was placed upon his brow, he swore to restore the lands claimed by his ancestor and to give all Tairnadal the chance for glory. Sinking his blade into the soil, he declared the foundation of Valenar, "the glorious realm."

Next Week -- What it means to be Valenar.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Elves of Valenar, Part 2

By Keith Baker

National Character

The Valenar are a martial culture. Members of a warband are always searching for glory. To the Valenar, war is an art and a game. The heroes of Xen'drik relied on guerilla tactics in which stealth and skill were more important than raw strength. When fighting a weak foe, the Valenar may engage in straightforward battle to eliminate the enemy quickly before moving on to more challenging enemies. When dealing with a challenging opponent, however, the elves take their time, stalking, weakening the enemy, and enjoying the game. This is true on all levels, including society, which is why wars among the elves can last centuries. With their long lifespans, the elves do not see history in the same way as humans, and they rarely feel a sense of urgency.

The predatory nature of the Valenar is reflected in all aspects of life. Whether a Valenar elf is engaged in a philosophical debate, bargaining with a merchant, or searching for an ancient treasure, the elf always views the situation from the standpoint of hunter and prey.

Valenar are organized into warclans and warbands. These are military units that also incorporate strong emotional bonds. A Valenar puts his patron ancestor above all things, followed by members of his warband, and only then by members of his blood family.

Valenar typically wear loose, silk clothing and light armor decorated with elaborate engraving and embroidery. One unusual tradition is the use of red or brown patterns mimicking blood spatters or stains so that the gore of battle will blend with the elf's clothing. A common accoutrement is the *zaelta* -- "spirit mask." This veil is practical in the harsh environment of the Blade Desert, but it also helps the wearer submerge his identity within that of his ancestor. A Valenar warrior usually wears the sigil of his ancestor on his helmet or as a brooch; thus, those looking at the elf see his ancestor, not the mortal warrior.

Valenar Religion: The Past in the Present

Valenar elves revere their ancestors. Whereas the Aereni preserve their ancestors beyond death and rely on their advice, the Valenar (indeed, all Tairnadal elves) seek to recreate the glorious deeds of their martial ancestors, thus allowing the ancestors' spirits to live again in the present age.

When an elf is born, the Keepers of the Past read the signs to determine the patron ancestor that will guide the elf through life. It is the duty of the child to honor and emulate this particular ancestor, though he should also strive to bring glory to his entire family. Many elves can share the same patron ancestor. This leads to competition among the elves as each strives to be the perfect embodiment of the common patron.

The relationship between the Tairnadal and the Undying Court varies from elf to elf. The Undying Court played a vital role in the battle against the dragons, and the Tairnadal respect these powerful and ancient elves. This attitude is common among the older warriors who fought side by side with the Aereni. Some younger elves see the Aereni as stagnant and cowardly and claim that the councilors of the Undying Court are not true heroes.

Keepers of the Past can be clerics or bards. A Valenar bard following this religion may take *spirit steed* as a 4th-level spell. A cleric of the Keepers of the Past can choose between the Destruction, Protection, and War domains, substituting *spirit steed* (4th) and *heroes' blade* (9th) for the corresponding spells on the War domain list. The Spirits of the Past are neutral, and the favored weapon of the Keepers is the double scimitar.

The Valenar in Battle

The Valenar are peerless warriors. Sword for sword, they have no equals in Eberron. Their low population is the greatest factor holding them in check. This skill is represented by the use of PC classes and high character levels. Most veteran Valenar soldiers are rangers of 4th to 6th level. With this level of skill, even a band of eight to twelve elves can pose a significant threat.

Valenar soldiers prefer light armor and rely on speed and skill as opposed to pure force. The Valenar are renowned for their cavalry; most soldiers possess a deep bond with their mounts. Common feats include Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mounted Combat, and all of the feats that build on these foundations.

While they are best known for their cavalry, the Valenar take great pride in skill with the scimitar and double scimitar -- so much so that all Valenar receive their racial Weapon Proficiency bonus in scimitar rather than longsword. Foremost among their swordsmen is an order of blade specialists known as the *Jaeldira*, "blade dancers." These are monks who often advance using the dervish prestige class presented in *The Complete Warrior*. Jaeldira monks may take Double Steel Strike as their bonus feat at 2nd or 6th level, applying this feat to the double scimitar instead of the double-bladed sword.

Magic also plays an important role among the armies of the Valenar. The ancient elves took the secrets of magic from their giant masters, and many of the heroes of old were wizards. Most Valenar warbands include at least one evoker or conjurer. Valenar of other classes often take a level or two of wizard. Many Valenar rangers prefer *mage armor* to leather or steel, and *mount* is an invaluable aid to a cavalry master whose steed falls in battle (this spell is seen as calling on the spirit of a Valenar warhorse, even though the abilities of the shadowy steed are far more limited). Most Valenar wizards have birds as familiars because these creatures are so useful for scouting fields of battle.

Questions to Ask

A Valenar elf's personality is strongly influenced by his patron ancestor. The Valenar strive to emulate their ancestors in all ways. When constructing a Valenar character or NPC, take some time to describe the patron ancestor. What was he known for? Was he a legendary archer or a swordsman? A poet? A traitor? What was his greatest battle? How did he die?

Another important question is why the elf is away from Valenar and his warband. If you start at 1st level, you are less skilled than the typical Valenar ranger. Here are a few options to consider:

- In the past, young Tairnadal would spend decades sparring against others of their age. At 1st level you are a novice warrior, but you believe you will gain glory and skill more quickly in the world than in the fortresses of Aerenal and Valenar. Your family may support your choice or you may be rebelling against tradition.
- Your ancestor was a paragon of honor and virtue, and you cannot support High King Vadallia's betrayal

of Cyre. You seek to bring glory to your ancestor, but you turned your back on the nation.

- Your patron ancestor was a pioneer in the Khorvaire expedition, renowned for making contact with members of other races. By joining a group of adventurers and exploring the unknown, you are reenacting the life of your ancestor.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Daughters of Sora Kell, Part 1

By Keith Baker

The walls of the chamber were studded with skulls. They were the only source of light in the vast cavern, a hundred skulls glowing like coals in a fading fire. Daine remembered the stories he'd heard as a child, how Sora Maenya would trap the souls of those she devoured. He saw a child's skull peering from a crack in the wall and cursed the gods that would allow such horrors to exist.

"Sweet, she was." The voice was the rasp of steel against the whetstone, soft and harsh.

A grove of darkwood oaks stood in the center of the cavern. Now Daine saw the three women standing amidst the trees. The speaker was tall and dark, her limbs as gnarled as the dead trees around her, her leather jerkin the color of dried blood. Her companion was an elf-maiden with snow-white skin and glittering blue eyes, a cascade of midnight hair framing her perfect features; though he knew it was an illusion, Daine still felt his heart skip a beat. A third figure watched from the shadows, red eyes peering from the deep hood of her gray robe.

"Greetings, traveler," the elf-maid said, and her voice was honey and song. "You have traveled far to reach this place. Wolf and worg, briar and bog, a path long and hard."

"Doomed and done," the giantess growled.

"Just begun," the graycloak whispered.

Daine dropped to one knee. "My ladies," he began, but the elf-maid stopped him with a raised hand. Her features slowly shifted. Now she was human, with eyes like emeralds and hair the color of fire.

"We know your purpose, child. My sister speaks of you often. You seek the Blade of Dol Azur. And we can grant your desire. But first you must fulfill ours."

The Three Sisters

Every child in Aundair is raised on tales of the terrible Sora Maenya, and any Brelish bard can sing a dozen songs about the fools who thought to match wits with Sora Katya. Few people believed these myths, and no one expected these hags to emerge at the head of an army of war trolls and skullcrusher ogres -- a power unseen in the west since the time of Dhakaan. Within a decade the hags established control over the lands beneath the Byeshk Mountains, bringing order to the region for the first time in seven thousand years.

Many questions linger over this newborn nation of Droaam. For centuries the hags were content to lurk in waste, wood, and swamp. What caused them to leave their haunts and claim a kingdom? Do they intend to extend their control beyond the Graywall mountains and claim human subjects, or is a nation of monsters all that they desire? Is a nation their only desire, or is it only the first step in a far greater scheme?

Individually, the Daughters of Sora Kell are three of the most powerful beings on Khorvaire. Sora Maenya and Sora Katya are monsters of legend, and this should be taken into account when dealing with them. They have faced and defeated the champions of centuries past and will not be easily impressed or intimidated. Through Sora Teraza, they already know much about the adventurers before they ever encounter them; a DM should make full use of this knowledge.

There are many ways to involve the Daughters in a campaign, and many of them don't involve fighting with the player characters. Sora Teraza is one of the most gifted oracles of the age, and the party may need her mystical insights. Sora Katya is engaged in schemes stretching across Khorvaire, and the party may get caught up in the machinations of Daask or House Tharashk's dealings with the hag. The hags possess many forgotten secrets and ancient treasures plucked from the depths of the Demon Wastes and the ruins of the Dhakaani Empire. They are often willing to bargain with adventurers, trading treasures for services or making potentially deadly wagers. The tales of Sora Katya are full of seeming triumphs that turn to disaster. Through Sora Teraza, the Daughters know much of the future, so that a seeming victory over them may have long-term consequences the adventurers didn't anticipate and which can transform what seemed like success into a hollow victory or worse. Perhaps the Blade of Dol Azur will allow you to kill Haskalask the Black, but perhaps that's just what the Daughters want.

What few people realize is that the Daughters are not simply hags: they are half-fiends. Their mother, Sora Kell, is a powerful night hag, though the fathers of the crones have been lost to legend. The Daughters do not have wings, but they possess all other half-fiend traits and abilities. When using *summon monster IX,* a Daughter can summon a only night hag, and they call on this power only as a last resort.

Should a party end up in battle with the Daughters of Sora Kell, the DM must remember that they are cunning, selfish, dangerous foes with well-developed sense of self-preservation. Each has survived fights with hundreds of heroes, great and small. Even Sora Maenya won't fight to the last breath; if circumstances turn against her, she will use *dimension door*, *invisibility*, or other tricks to flee, returning when she has gathered her strength and her followers. It is possible that epic heroes could defeat the Daughters of Sora Kell, but it shouldn't be an easy task.

Next week -- details on the sisters ... and stats for Sora Maenya!

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Daughters of Sora Kell, Part 2

By Keith Baker

Individually, the Daughters of Sora Kell are three of the most powerful beings on Khorvaire. Sora Maenya and Sora Katra are monsters of legend, and this should be taken into account when dealing with them. Through Sora Teraza, they will probably already know much about the adventurers before they ever encounter them; a DM should make full use of this knowledge.

Sora Katra

NE Female half-fiend green hag, Bard 11

Renowned in song as the trickster of the deep swamp, Sora Katra has been a figure in Brelish folktales for centuries. Stories abound of those who have gone to her in search of secrets or treasure, planning to best her with wit or steel. With few exceptions, these tales always come to a bad end. Her charisma and skill with words are remarkable, and while the threat of violence forms the foundation of Droaam, Sora Katra's rhetoric is quickly building a fanatical following for the hags.

When all three of the hags are encountered, Sora Katra will do most of the talking. She uses *disguise self* constantly, choosing forms to distract or disorient her opponents. She sees the world as a vast gameboard and is always playing out dozens of schemes. One of her primary tools is a criminal organization known as Daask (a giant word translating as "monstrous eye"), which has spread east through Breland and Aundair. More information about this organization can be found in the upcoming sourcebook *Sharn: The City of Towers.*

In addition to her powers as a hag and half-fiend, Sora Katra possesses a legendary talent for curses. Once per day she can *bestow curse* as a spell-like ability; once per month she can perform *binding*. She must supply the usual components for *binding.* She performs these spells as a 20th level bard, and the save DCs are Charisma based.

Sora Teraza

LN Female half-fiend dusk hag, Cleric 13

There are few legends of Sora Teraza. Until the founding of Droaam, only the most erudite bards had heard of the blind crone said to wander the Demon Wastes. Many believe that she is the motivating force behind Droaam -- that she was the one who sought out her sisters, guided by an oracular vision. She speaks rarely, but her sisters pay close attention to every word.

All dusk hags possess oracular abilities, but Sora Teraza's are unnaturally powerful. However, she does not control these visions; instead, the visions control her, as she seems to feel an obligation to fulfill the visions she receives. This is a tool for the DM, and there is no mechanic attached to it. It is a plot device to serve the needs of the campaign.

Although she is blind, Sora Teraza is aware of all that occurs around her; this is represented by blindsight that extends in a 60-foot radius. She cannot be flanked or caught flat-footed.

Sora Maenya

NE Female half-fiend annis, Barbarian 10

Sora Maenya has terrorized the Eldeen Reaches for generations. Her strength and appetite are legendary, and she is said to have wrestled the dragon Saerylak and devoured him raw. Few creatures have survived her iron grip, and she takes personal pleasure in breaking giants and other monsters that challenge the Daughters. Over the centuries she has devoured shifter tribes and left entire villages barren and empty. She takes great pleasure in hunting rangers and other human prey. While many Droaamites adore Sora Katra, far more fear Sora Maenya.

While Sora Maenya is known for her strength, she is no dumb brute. She lets Sora Katra run the nation but Sora Maenya is a cunning orator in her own right. She prefers to ply her skills on individuals, playing games with her prey before tearing them to shreds. She is also an unbridled sensualist, and she is always searching for new tastes and experiences. Of all the sisters, Sora Maenya is most likely to be encountered alone, as she wanders the wilds in search of bloody entertainment.

Sora Maenya prefers to fight with her hands; she enjoys the sensation of crushing bones and rending flesh. However, when leading her war trolls into battle, she may choose to use a battle axe or greatsword. The Daughters have many magical weapons hidden in the vaults beneath the Great Crag.

Sora Maenya

Female half-fiend annis hag barbarian 10; CR 19; Large outsider (native)(augmented monstrous humanoid); HD 7d8+35 plus 10d12+50; hp 171; Init +5; Spd 50 ft.; AC 31, touch 14, flat-footed 31; Base Atk +17; Grap +36; Atk +34 melee (1d6+17, claws); Full Atk +34/+34 melee (1d6+17, claws) and +29 melee (1d8+9, bite); SA Improved grab, rage 3/day, rake 1d6+17, rend 2d6+24, smite good (+17 damage), spell-like abilities; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction (see below), fast movement, immunity to poison, improved uncanny dodge, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, soul binding, spell resistance 27; AL N; SV Fort +16, Ref +15, Will +13; Str 40, Dex 20, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +12, Climb +20, Craft (bonecarving) +8, Craft (leatherworking) +8, Diplomacy +16, Disguise +12 (+14 when acting), Hide +11, Intimidate +24, Jump +20, Listen +21, Move Silently +10, Sense Motive +6, Speak Language (Common, Elven, Giant), Spot +11, Survival +18, Swim +20; Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Track.

Damage Reduction (Ex): Sora Maenya possesses DR 10/magic, DR 2/bludgeoning, and DR 2/--. Her natural weapons are considered to be magic weapons for purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

Soul Binding (Su): By taking an hour to devour a corpse and perform a special ritual, Sora Maenya can trap the soul of her victim. This is identical to the spell *soul bind* except that the soul is bound in the victim's skull instead of a gem, and the ritual can be performed within 17 hours of death. The effect has a caster level of 17.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day -- *darkness, disguise self* (CL 8th), *fog cloud* (CL 8th), *poison* (DC 16)*, unholy aura* (DC 20)*;* 1/day -- *blasphemy* (DC 19)*, contagion* (DC 16)*, desecrate, horrid wilting* (17d6, DC 20)*, summon monster IX* (night hag), *unhallow, unholy blight* (8d8, DC 16)*.* Caster level is 17th unless otherwise stated and save DCs are Charisma-based.

Rage: While raging, Sora Maenya gains 34 temporary hit points. The following changes should be put in effect; AC 29, touch 12, flat-footed 29; Atk +36 melee (1d6+19, claws); Full Atk +36/+36 melee (1d6+19, claws) and +31 melee (1d8+10, bite); SA Rake 1d6+19, rend 2d6+27; SV Fort +16, Will +13; Str 44, Con 24. Her rage lasts for 11 rounds.

Possessions:+3 glamered studded leather, amulet of mighty fists +2, bag of holding (type II), *belt of giant strength +4, boots of the cowards leap*, *potion of barkskin +5,* 3 *potions of cure serious wounds, potion of displacement, potion of eagle's splendor, potion of fly, potion of haste, potion of invisibility,* 2 *potions of lesser restoration, potion of protection from arrows 15/magic, potion of tongues, potion of undetectable alignment.* The *boots of the cowards leap* allow the wearer to use *dimension door* 1/day with a CL of 9.

Though her hunched posture hides her true size, this withered crone must be at least 8 feet tall. She wears a hooded cloak and leather rags the color of dried blood. Her limbs are long and gnarled, but her hands do not shake and her fingers are tipped by long black talons. Her withered skin is a deep indigo blue, and her hair a filthy black nest. Her eyes glow with a fierce red light, and when she smiles you see the mass of needle-sharp teeth that fill her mouth.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

Dwarves of the Mror Holds, Part 1

By Keith Baker

Gold is the gift of the mountains, but iron comes from blood and bone.

-- Mror proverb

Heart and History

The Mror Holds are founded on iron and gold. The Ironroot Mountains hold vast deposits of precious metals and rare ore, and the dwarf lords have used these resources to create a mercantile empire that stretches across Khorvaire. But there is steel beneath the jewels and finery of a Mror dwarf -- the heart of a warrior whose ancestors engaged in constant battle for almost seven thousand years.

Much of the early history of the Mror dwarves is based on fragments passed down through oral tradition and scattered across the clans. It is generally accepted that the dwarves first appeared on Khorvaire approximately twelve thousand years ago, but beyond this, stories differ. Some tales say that the dwarves came from a land of ice and snow, which most modern scholars deem to be the Frostfell -- although to date, those few, brave souls who have explored this frigid land have found no evidence of a dwarven civilization. Others claim that the dwarves rose up from the earth itself, that Kol Korran and Onatar forged them from the stone of the mountains or that Eberron created them to battle the aberrations of Khyber. Every clan and every dwarf has his own opinion, and most are ready to fight with anyone who challenges it.

Regardless of their origin, it is clear that the dwarves were a mighty power long before the present day. Dhakaani dirges speak of battles with the "stonefolk of the mountains," and the Dhakaani were repelled from the Ironroot Mountains by a unified, disciplined dwarvish nation. Even today, scholars observe that Mror battle tactics are ideally suited to counter the traditional techniques used by the Dhakaani and their Darguul descendents.

The dwarves themselves have many tales from this age of glory, though it is difficult to separate fact from myth. Tales speak of Stone Kings and Dragon Keepers, of runesmiths forging mighty blades in the depths. This age came to an end in the reign of Lord Kordran Mror. A number of warriors and heroes had stirred up unrest in the deep realm, and Mror banished twelve of the leaders plus their followers to the surface of the mountains. The depths were sealed off with magical wards and a clan of wardens sent to the lands above to ensure that the seals remained until the others "proved themselves to be worthy of the kingdom below."

The dwarf lords took many steps to prove their worth. It is said that the great stone face of Lord Mror was produced at this time, though this is itself a point of some debate. Korranberg sages claim that the dwarves simply didn't have the skills to produce such an artifact, and argue that they must have sculpted down a larger image. For evidence, they point to obscure references to "the face of Eberron," and suggest that "Dragon Keeper" may have referred to a draconic monument dating back to the dawn of time.

In any case, when none of these efforts produced results, the banishe dwarves fell to fighting among themselve. The culture slowly devolved, and while the surface dwarves clung to the secrets of iron, they embraced the grim

joy of battle. For thousands of years the clans fought one another, each seeking to prove its ultimate superiority and earn the keys to the kingdom of stone.

When humans first came to Khorvaire, they ignored the feuding clans of the Ironroot Mountains. The dwarves were too busy fighting one another to take an interest in the world beyond the mountains, and the ancient battles continued unabated until Karrn cast his eyes toward the region. The young prince guessed at the wealth that might be hidden in the mountains, and he wanted his share. With his father's permission, he led an army to subjugate the "mountain barbarians." Though (or perhaps because) they had been fighting for millennia, the dwarves were ill prepared to face an unfamiliar foe. Together the clans could have easily expelled the invader, but Karrn played on their feuds to divide and conquer the clans. Within a decade, the clan lords had bent the knee to the prince of Karrnath.

Having freed the goblins in his conquest of the Five Nations, King Galifar was not about to condone dwarvish slavery. Karrn was instructed to bring the King's Peace to this savage land. The dwarves were forced to stop their warring ways and encouraged to develop a new nation based on the model of Galifar, providing tribute to Karrnath and the old kingdom. The Karrns surveyed the mountains, but they could not pierce the ancient wards, and they drew their conclusions from the veins of ore they could reach.

Decades passed. Many dwarves abandoned their old ways and spread across Khorvaire. Those who remained in the mountains grumbled under the burden of tax and tribute, and slowly their discontent pushed them together.

Then came the summons. The dwarves of Kundarak were the keepers of the wards, and they called the lords of the twelve clans to their hold. In the halls of Korunda Gate the clan lords met in peace, discussed their plans for the nation, and expressed concern about their future in the Kingdom of Galifar. After a few days of talk, the Patriarch of Kundarak led the leaders down beneath the holdfast to one of the ancient wards. "At long last, you have set aside your differences," he said. "Step forward, and open the gate to the kingdom below." As twelve dwarves touched the seal, it faded away, and the path to the past was revealed.

What lay below was a shock to all. While the clan lords battled on the surface of the mountain, the descendants of Mror had fought the Daelkyr in the depths -- and lost. There was no glorious kingdom of noble dwarves awaiting their return, only ruins and shadow, with terrible monsters lurking in the darkness. Ancient treasures remained in these desolate fortresses, and mines still dripped with all manner of ore. Slowly the dwarves reclaimed the ancient fortresses and the fortune hidden below.

Now that its ancient duty was discharged, clan Kundarak -- which had long possessed the Dragonmark of Warding -- was drawn into the greater community of dragonmark houses. With the aid of the Zil gnomes, the dwarves of House Kundarak established themselves as the foremost bankers of Khorvaire. Many of the other clans worked with Kundarak, selling their ores and jewels through the bank or serving as guards and enforcers.

Through all this, the dwarves remained citizens of the crown of Galifar. The dwarves were patient, and most placed great stock in their word and the honor of their ancestors; the clan lords of the past had sworn an oath to Galifar, and it was not the place of their children to break that vow. Even though Karrnath raised taxes, the wealth of the deep mines far outstripped this tribute. Many of the dwarf lords called for rebellion, but the clans could never come to an agreement, and no single clan wanted to act on its own.

Then came the Last War. The dwarves had sworn an oath to Galifar, but that kingdom no longer existed. Never again would the dwarves submit to the rule of a single king, not even a dwarf. They declared the birth of a new nation, a formal alliance of the clans that would one day rival the kingdom of old: The Mror Holds.

Next: What it means to be Mror!

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

Dwarves of the Mror Holds, Part 2

By Keith Baker

It takes an anvil to forge an axe.

-- Mror proverb

National Character

The Mror dwarves are a passionate people. They are driven by pride, clan loyalty, and a fierce love of life -- food, drink, battle, and all the myriad experiences the world has to offer. Among strangers, a Mror dwarf often hides his true thoughts and feelings behind a grim mask. But in the company of friends, dwarves embrace life with unparalleled zest.

The Mror dwarves are fierce negotiators, favoring intimidation over subtle diplomacy. Most hold honor in high regard, and the oath of a Mror lord is said to be as unbreakable as adamantine. Nothing is ever reliable in Eberron, however, and while the Mror may on the whole be more honorable than humanity, the word of an Aurum concordian is often worth little more than the wind.

The Mror dwarves have been merchants for centuries, but they have been warriors for millennia. Even when Karrn enforced the peace of Galifar, the dwarves continued to train their children in the art of war. While the Mror Holds were largely isolated from the Last War, the orc raiders of the Jhorash'tar remain a constant threat, and the crags and chasms are home to ogres, trolls, and far worse things. The greatest heroes of the Holds hunt in the depths of Khyber, stalking runehounds, umber hulks, and other aberrations in the shadows below the mountains. Some assume that because the Mror are wealthy, they are soft -- while in fact they are harder than stone and sharper than steel. Gold is a new weapon for the Mror dwarves; they have never forgotten the way of the axe.

While the Mror dwarves are proud of their young nation and the power that they wield, old feuds and rivalries still remain, and the dwarves are extremely competitive. Generally these conflicts are out in the open; two teamsters will race to reach a destination, two merchants will undercut one another; two nobles will back different hawks in a hunt. Members of the Aurum are known for pursuing secret vendettas with darker and deadlier consequences. Some say that the Aurum is a clan in its own right, that its power is greater than any of the families of old. Most of the honorable lords feel that the Aurum represents a corruption of clan virtues. They say that true Mror are iron and gold, but those who serve the Aurum are gold alone -- influential but soft and unreliable.

Mror Fashion

Humans often see the Mror dwarves as greedy and vain. The truth is more complicated. Most Mror dwarves appreciate fine workmanship in a way that few others can comprehend; the dwarves will literally fall in love with objects. Looking at a beautiful goblet, a dwarf sees the toast he will share with his wife (when he finds her). A Mror dwarf can tell stories about every valuable object he owns, either looking to the past he has shared with his treasure or the future he expects to have.

Beyond this, the Mror see personal appearance as far more than simple vanity. A dwarf's accoutrements reflect his wealth and thus, his power, but they also indicate his appreciation of beauty, his judgment, and his intelligence. A poorly dressed merchant has a hard time in business. If he cannot judge the worth of his own clothes, who will trust his merchandise? As a result, a Mror dwarf may spend more on his clothing, armor, jewelry, and weapons than on his home. The Mror are stoic and content to endure physical discomfort and hardship. Sleeping on stone is preferable to wearing drab clothing.

As a result of this, a troop of Mror soldiers are a colorful sight. Dwarven armor is typically coated with enamel or covered with complex engraving. Weapons are equally striking; in addition to colorful hafts and gilded blades, many are made in unusual designs personalized to the warrior. Jewelry is very important to the Mror and often carries special significance, indicating rank within a clan, military honor, or civic office. A Mror dwarf can recognize the significance of another dwarf's jewelry by making an Intelligence check (DC 5); any character can recognize the relevance of the jewels with a Knowledge (nobility) check (DC 20).

In contrast, Mror architecture is stark and functional. Possessing darkvision, dwarves have little need for windows, though most buildings are lit out of deference to gnome and human immigrants. The Mror dwarves derive pleasure from good company, fine food, strong drink, and physical activity. They rarely bother with soft cushions or similar comforts. A wealthy merchant is more likely to spend his profits on beautiful clothes or finely crafted weapons than on lush carpeting and feather comforters.

The Mror Dwarves in Battle

When Prince Karrn led his forces into the Ironroot Mountains, he found a culture engaged in constant warfare. The dwarves placed more value on weapons and armor than home and hearth, and the Mror villages were pale shadows of the cities of Galifar. This was but one of the factors that led Karrn to call the dwarves "barbarians." While the Mror find joy in battle, they are not raging berserkers. Most Mror soldiers have warrior levels, and there are many fighters among the Mror Holds. Other combat classes are uncommon, though Clan Droranath is noteworthy for having true barbarians.

Most Mror soldiers prefer heavy armor and close combat, and typically focus on Power Attack and its related feats. Mror warriors traditionally name weapons and shields. When a dwarf tells a story about one of his many battles, he will refer to his axe as if it were another warrior standing at his side. Battlecries are an important part of Mror culture. A dwarf may develop his own, or he may adopt the battle call of an honored ancestor. Dwarves wish to be remembered on the battlefield, and their colorful armor and mighty cries reflect this fact.

Elite Mror troops generally follow the path of the fighter. Because honor and military skill are both held in high regard by the dwarves, kensai and knight protectors can also be found in the service of the clan lords. Dwarven defenders guard the vaults of House Kundarak, and there are a few frenzied berserkers in Clan Droranath. The dwarf fighter substitution level presented in *Races of Stone* is appropriate for Mror characters.

While Mror smiths constantly improve their skills, they do not possess the uncanny skills of their ancestors. If you use *Races of Stone*, Mror dwarves do not have the ability to produce dwarfcraft items or dwarven armor, and they cannot create magic forges. Such items might be found as relics of the first age, however, and a DM could choose to introduce a smith who has mastered these ancient techniques and learned to produce improved armor or weaponry.

Magic among the Mror Dwarves

While priests of Kol Korran and Onatar have always had a place in the mountains, prior to Karrn's Conquest there was no tradition of arcane magic among the dwarves of the Ironroot Mountains. It is clear that the dwarves of the first kingdom possessed runesmiths and artificers of considerable skill, but this knowledge was lost when the clans were exiled from the depths. In recent centuries, the Mror dwarves have learned much from working with gnomish immigrants. Some clans are beginning to reclaim the secrets of the first age. Wizards are still uncommon, but a handful of artificers work in the depths, and most holdfasts contain magewright smiths and other simple spellworkers.

Mror Gnomes

Many outsiders have trouble with the image of dwarf bankers; they see dwarves as warriors, not bean-counters. In fact, the dwarves have little interest in book-keeping. The dwarves have the gold. They take pride in their ability to protect their vaults. They know how to drive a hard bargain. But the paperwork? That's where the gnomes come in.

When Karrn brought order to the Ironroot Mountains, he paved the way for a massive gnomish immigration. The gnomes of Zilargo were inquisitive, diplomatic, and skilled miners in their own right. Karrn initially brought gnomes to the mountains to serve as translators, mediators, and advisors. The dwarves were more comfortable dealing with gnomes than with humans, because clan lords disliked looking up at the invaders. For their part, the gnomes saw a tremendous amount of potential in the mountains, and many of the gnomish families sent envoys east. These immigrants played a major role in shaping the mercantile culture of the emerging nation. Most clans have a close relationship with one or more of the gnomish clans. House Sivis and House Kundarak have very strong ties. Sivis gnomes uncovered the full potential of the Mark of Warding and helped Clan Kundarak find its place among the dragonmark houses, and Sivis notaries and stonesenders play a crucial role in the Kundarak banking guild. Most gnomes in the Mror Holds maintain ties with their families in Zilargo, but a few have broken ties with the homeland and fully embraced Mror culture.

Because the dwarves place great importance on personal appearance, the number of gnome tailors and estheticians in the Mror Holds is growing. Gnome *prestidigitation* experts excel at keeping colors fresh, and wealthy Mror pay good platinum for the latest gnome *glamerweave* designs.

The Clans

Mror exiled twelve heroes from the deep kingdom and set the line of Kundarak to watch them. The great clans are the direct descendants of these heroes, and the holds bear their names. Each hero was accompanied by a host of loyal followers and servants. As a result, there are dozens of different family lines in the Mror Holds.

The great clans are Mroranon, Doldarun, Droranath, Kolkarun, Kundarak, Laranak, Londurak, Narathun, Noldrun, Soldorak, Soranath, Toldorath, and Tordannon. Kundarak, however, has never been a part of the council of clans, and Clan Noldrun was completely destroyed (see page 193 of the **Eberron***Campaign Setting* for more information).

Questions to Ask

When you play a Mror PC or NPC, consider the following:

- What is distinctive about your appearance? What image are you trying to project?

- Are you pursuing a feud with a member of another clan? What wrong has been done to you? How serious is the conflict?
- What is the name of your weapon? Do you have a personal battlecry?
- Mror dwarves often collect a particular type of object: jewels, goblets, daggers, and so on. Do you follow this tradition? What do you collect?
- If you are from the Mror Holds, there's probably a family business you could settle into. Why have you left the holds?
- Will you try to keep your word? If so, be very careful about making promises. A known oathbreaker is held in low regard in the Mror Holds.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

Church of the Silver Flame, Part 1

By Keith Baker

"Why do you hurt your fellow citizens?"

The innkeeper froze. "What?"

"I can see the greed swirling in your soul," Handor said. "Do you water down your ale? Charge three crowns when the price is two? Or worse?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," the man stammered. His eyes flickered down to Handor's blade.

"I am a paladin of the Silver Flame. I am sworn to fight evil in all its forms. My sword is for the fiends and monsters that deserve neither reason nor mercy. But you are no monster, and you can still find redemption." Handor put his hand on the hosteller's shoulder. "Consider your actions. Think about those you have harmed. Seek out a minister and cleanse your soul. The true darkness is rising, and if we are to survive we must all find a path to the light. If you cannot . . . then perhaps you are a monster, after all."

Core Beliefs

The Silver Flame has existed since the dawn of time. When Eberron was overrun by darkness and the demon spawn of Khyber, the Flame arose to bring light to the world and to bind the fiends in the depths of the Dragon Below. But the Flame was too pure for flawed humanity, and the people of Khorvaire could not hear its call -- until Tira Miron set upon her righteous path. This noble warrior had devoted her life to the cause of honor and sacrifice, and in her the Flame found a worthy vessel. Guided by a glorious feathered serpent, Tira gave her life to end the reign of a demon lord that had escaped its bond. Though she fell in battle, Tira's soul joined with the Silver Flame, and in so doing, she became a conduit -- a voice that humanity could hear. Across Thrane, the pure of heart heard her call; and ever since then, the Church of the Silver Flame has stood against evil, whatever form it might take.

The Silver Flame is not an anthropomorphic deity. It is a celestial force comprised of a vast multitude of noble spirits. It neither requires sacrifices of gold or spices, nor does it want praise in the form of prayer. Instead, it needs bold warriors and pure ministers who will embrace the light and use that inspiration to banish evil from the world. A typical worshiper of the Sovereign Host offers prayers in the hopes that the deities will help him; a true follower of the Silver Flame is interested only in how she can serve the cause of the flame.

The Afterlife: Some say that when a true follower of the Flame passes on, his spirit joins with the Silver Flame, strengthening the light. While some people may see this as a mediocre reward, the priests of the Flame say that they can achieve no greater bliss and that glory beyond anything that can be experienced in life awaits -- not to mention that this far surpasses the experience of wasting away in Dolurrh. For this reason, clerics of the Silver Flame are loathe to raise the dead; when a true hero dies, his spirit has gone to a better place, and he continues to fight from the other side. Gold rarely influences a true priest of the Flame; the cleric brings the hero back only if she believes he has a noble purpose to serve in this life, and this often involves a quest or vow.

Human Evil: The goal of the Church is to cleanse the world of evil. In the minds of most outsiders, this conjures up images of templars and exorcists fighting with sword and spell. But the vast majority of the members of the Church are not warriors. More people are in the ministry and the Order of Friars than in the Order of Templars, and they seek to battle evil by nurturing good. A Thrane farmer who is faithful to the Flame does not fight demons. But he seeks to live his life by the ideals of the Church: to help those in need, to encourage virtuous behavior, and to be a force of light in the world. Gradations of evil exist, and while no mercy can be granted to the demon, hope remains that the greedy merchant or the arrogant king may follow a different path if shown how. The minister -- and the paladin -- leads by example and demonstrates to others the errors of their ways. With this said, puritans of the Flame may be less forgiving and more apt to use violence as a tool to eliminate social evils as well as supernatural forces.

Other Faiths: While the Church of the Silver Flame seeks to abolish the worship of the Blood of Vol, the Cults of the Dragon Below, and the Dark Six, it can be tolerant of other religions. Warriors of the Flame have much in common with the followers of Dol Arrah, and the teachings of Aureon and Boldrei echo those of the Church. With that said, followers of the Sovereign Host are often somewhat lackadaisical in their faith, and this often draws disdain from the faithful of the Church. A loyal member of the Church can associate freely with followers of the Sovereign Host or the Path of Light, but a zealous friar will still try to lure them to the true faith.

The Fury of the Flame

The ministry of the Silver Flame performs countless good works throughout the Five Nations, but the actions of the templars often overshadow these efforts. The most dramatic instance of this occurred when the inquisition destroyed the lycanthropes. To outsiders, this wholesale slaughter may seem shocking and unforgivable. However, a few factors can help people understand how such an event could occur -- and what the Church might do in the future.

- The Church of the Silver Flame operates under a strict hierarchy. The Church expects the faithful to trust the wisdom of those who stand above them, since those higher in the hierarchy stand closer to the Flame. Thus, most templars act without questioning their orders: If a cardinal authorizes an action, it must be in the best interests of the world. This is especially true of the puritans.

- The ultimate goal of the Church is to cleanse Eberron itself. For many members of the Church, this noble goal justifies any means required to reach it. This manner of thinking serves as one of the sources of evil-aligned priests within Thrane. Such a priest may be good in almost all ways, but she has a willingness to employ evil tools -- such as torture -- when necessary to achieve a goal that furthers the Church's cause.

- When the Church targets a problem, it seeks to completely eliminate it. The templars act with ruthless efficiency. In the case of lycanthropy, any lycanthrope can afflict a victim with a curse that alters behavior and alignment, and this makes the victim a threat to others and a new carrier for the curse. In 832 YK, the Keeper of the Silver Flame declared that lycanthropy afflicted the soul as well as the body, since it could turn the noblest soul to a tool of darkness. Even those lycanthropic strains that were not inherently evil still force a change of behavior on the subject, and were thus suspect; the Keeper declared that these still imperiled the soul. If a single lycanthrope remained alive, it could pass the curse to others, and they could pass the curse to others, and within a generation the problem could arise anew. Thus all lycanthropes -- even those seemingly innocent and young -- must be destroyed.

  A handful of paladins found alternatives. Some helped werebears escape to Lamannia, while others sought to cure the afflicted. Unfortunately, the process of breaking the curse is long and involved, and the Keeper of the Flame said that once the curse was set (via changing alignment), nothing could save the

> victim's soul. And so the templars relied on their silvered swords, cutting out the cancer and praying for forgiveness when innocents fell at their hands.

The Church is fighting a war, and it intends to win. Casualties are certain. Sacrifices must be made, and allies may fall to friendly fire. But the Church will always act swiftly, decisively, and in a manner that serves the greater good -- at least, as the cardinals see it.

The idea that good people can do evil and that evil people can serve the cause of good is a central theme of Eberron. The Church of the Silver Flame embraces this paradox. It has a noble cause. The majority of its followers champion the ways of the light. And yet, with the best of intentions, they can become your enemies -- or you may be asked to do questionable things in the service of the Church.

Next: Using the Church!

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

Church of the Silver Flame, Part 2

By Keith Baker

Ministers and Priests

The Church of the Silver Flame is highly structured. Someone who seeks to enter the order of friars or ministers first serves as an apprentice within his local community, learning the basic teachings of the Flame. When he receives the blessing of the local minister, he can enter one of the seminaries of the Flame.

Most initiates progress as experts, learning mundane skills that will help them serve their communities. Knowledge (religion), Heal, and Diplomacy are vital skills, and Knowledge (the planes) and Sense Motive are encouraged. In addition, most initiates have ranks in Craft or Profession. Various challenges test an initiate's potential to channel divine magic; those who possess this talent are called to the Great Seminary of Flamekeep, where the wisest adepts of the church teach them. The cardinals occasionally visit the Great Seminary, and on rare occasions the Keeper herself will speak to the young adepts. A character's backstory could incorporate this, giving a PC a pre-existing connection with a high-ranking patron in the church. But is the cardinal in question faithful to the Flame, or is she a corrupt schemer?

At the end of this training, a minister usually possesses two NPC levels (expert, adept, or one of each) or one level of cleric.

Paladins and Templars

The templars learn their trade in one of the fortress monasteries scattered across Khorvaire. While monasteries exist throughout Thrane, Breland, and Aundair, the three largest fortresses are located in Thrane: the massive monastery of Kloijnir, which watches over Flamekeep; Tira's Watch, on the southeastern border of Thrane and Breland; and Morningcrest to the west. Templars live an austere life, and they dedicate themselves to combat training and religious studies. The majority of templars become warriors, while the most gifted become fighters or monks. A cleric typically travels to a fortress monastery after completing spiritual training in Flamekeep, and here he learns the use of weapons and armor. These monasteries also serve as garrisons, and most templars remain at the monastery even after completing their training. Occasionally a templar accompanies a friar or serves as a pilgrim; this calling is a matter between the templar and the abbot.

Paladins are a special case. You cannot train to be a paladin: it is a spiritual calling. Many paladins learn basic skills outside of the Church, since the Voice of the Flame guides them. Ministers and friars who discover a potential paladin send her to a monastery for full training, though some paladins have risen to significant levels before officially joining the church. A paladin must undergo tests at Flamekeep before she can act as an official representative of the Church. Some then take up residence at the templar monasteries, but many serve as pilgrims or serve in secular organizations, such as the Knights of Thrane or the King's Citadel; their calling draws them out to the world, and they find monastic life stifling.

Eberron is a place where alignments are blurred, but the paladin is held to a higher standard. A paladin embodies good, and the Flame itself calls her to serve as a champion of the light. A paladin's powers are the

result of her faith, her purity, and her destiny. If a player wants to be a corrupt warrior with divine powers or a holy warrior who doubts her cause, she shouldn't be a paladin -- she should play a fighter/cleric, or something similar. With that said, the moral ambiguity of Eberron makes life challenging for the paladin who expects everything to be black and white. In a crowd of ten commoners, odds are good that three will be evil. But that doesn't mean they are monsters or even killers -- each is just a greedy, selfish person who willingly watches others suffer. The sword is no answer here; the paladin is charged to protect these people. Oratory, virtue, and inspiration are the weapons of the paladin -- though intimidation may have its place. A paladin who meets this challenge and lives up to the ideals of the Flame should be treated with respect by the faithful; a paladin in good standing should find shelter and support among any community of the Flame.

Friars and Pilgrims

Ministers and templars are assigned to specific regions. Friars and pilgrims take the light of the Flame into dark places. A friar goes through the same training as a minister, but instead of settling in a single community, he is charged with the task of missionary work. A friar travels across Khorvaire preaching the virtues of the Silver Flame and attempting to win converts to the church. Friars also serve as the eyes of the Church; a friar will search every new village for signs of possession, cult activity, or other foulness, and then he can report his findings back to the nearest Church official. The majority of friars are experts; a few remarkable individuals possess adept levels.

The role of the pilgrim is less strictly defined. A pilgrim wanders the world. She is not required to perform missionary work, but she is expected to lead by example wherever she goes, to oppose evil in all its forms. This is the lowest rank in the hierarchy of the church, but it still represents a commitment -- a vow to serve and protect. Pilgrims are not as well received as paladins, but the faithful will still support a passing pilgrim in exchange for a sermon or tales of her bold deeds. This is the most likely role for a PC cleric to fill: As a pilgrim, she is free to go on any adventure she sees fit.

Corruption

In Eberron, the alignment of a priest does not have to match that of his deity. As a result, corruption is a major concern in the Church of the Silver Flame. However, corruption can take many forms, and each can have a vastly different impact on a campaign.

The most common form of corruption is when zealous devotion causes a priest to set aside mercy and compassion. Such a priest may be a pillar of his community and an admirable man who has absolute dedication to the Church. But if he must sacrifice the innocent in pursuit of the greater good, he will. He will torture and kill without remorse. He will not glorify these actions, and will not torture needlessly -- but he will not shirk from using dark methods to win the battle against evil.

A second form of corruption is greed. The clerics and adepts of the Silver Flame are not supposed to sell divine spells; these miracles are to be saved for the protection of the faithful. But some clerics use their spells to gain gold or influence. Some just want to live lives of luxury, but others believe that there are many ways to fight evil -- and that political power is a more effective weapon than a paladin's sword. While these priests have an evil alignment, they may still be working in the interests of the greater good -- at least, as they see it.

These two types of priests both have their redeeming features. They do not see themselves as evil and may aid the cause of good. But then there is the third category -- the priest who knowingly embraces the darkness. A second voice whispers in the Silver Flame -- that of the terrible demon that Tira bound in battle. Occasionally a

good priest is led astray by this false flame. However, a few seek out this quiet voice and serve the interests of the Lords of Dust from the heart of the church. Some believe they will gain immortality or fiendish power in exchange for their devotion. Others have been driven mad by the horrors of the Last War and believe that the light has forsaken the world. Either way, these heretics are cunning and dangerous.

Unfortunately, dealing with corruption is a tricky business. The Church does not define evil as "that which can be detected with *detect evil*"; as noted earlier, someone with an evil alignment may serve the greater good. Furthermore, a cleric of a good deity always possesses a good aura, regardless of her personal alignment. Rank within the church hierarchy is another complication: a pilgrim can't kill a cardinal and expect to get away with it because "he was evil." She will need proof of actions that went against church doctrine and harmed the innocent. Thus, a paladin's ability to *detect evil* allows her to judge the character of those around her -- but it's in no way a license to kill.

When dealing with this sort of situation, a DM should bear in mind that a significant difference exists between rank and character level. A cardinal may be a high-level cleric. He could also be a low-level expert. A high-ranking church official may not be able to physically challenge a high-level PC -- but he has the many resources of the church and the Templars behind him, and lower-ranking members of the Church are expected to defer to his judgment or face sanction and excommunication.

Quests

The Silver Flame has a simple goal: Abolish evil. There are hundreds of options: venturing into Droaam to strike against an enclave of monsters; sneaking into Karrnath to destroy a temple of the Blood of Vol; battling lurking fiends or possessing demons in the cities of Khorvaire; recovering a cursed object and then traveling to the Demon Wastes to destroy it; and so on.

Prayers

Appeals to the Silver Flame are short and direct; this religion is born of war, and prayers must be called out in the midst of battle. References to light and flame are extremely common. "Light of the Flame, guide my arm."

Temples

Temples of the Silver Flame always are heavily fortified and capable of providing shelter to the innocent. Furnishings are typically austere, but elaborate carvings displaying intertwining flames and heroes of the church often cover the walls. A brazier filled with silver *continual flame* is set before the altar.

Rites

Priests of the Silver Flame perform many services. While some of these are practical -- ranging from marriage to military training (specifically, archery) -- the tasks of the priest also include offering guidance and inspiration to the community. Daily services provide the faithful with the chance to hear the words of the priest and to present their troubles.

Heralds and Allies

Tira Miron is the voice of the Silver Flame, and her spirit responds to *commune*, *augury*, or similar entreaties -- or

so it appears. Tira has never manifested physically since her sacrifice, and in all likelihood she cannot; she is a conduit that allows the Flame to speak to the common races, not an avatar to fight its battles. Its primary allies are the couatl, but over the millennia a number of noble celestials have heard the call of the Flame and chosen to serve its cause. Thus, a cleric's call for aid could be answered by an archon, an angel, or something stranger and more exotic.

Favored Weapon

The favored weapon of the Church of the Silver Flame is the longbow. Many believe that this dates back to the battle against the rakshasas, who are most vulnerable to piercing weapons. Furthermore, a quiver of arrows can include shafts with a wide range of enchantments or arrowhead materials, allowing a templar to operate at peak efficiency against all manner of beasts and fiends. Priests also encourage archery as a form of meditation, and in many communities the faithful can come to train at the local church of the Flame. This can result in an unusually high number of 1st-level warriors or commoners with Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow) in areas devoted to the Flame.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

The Gnomes of Zilargo, Part 1

By Keith Baker

Dorilan Del Caroldan sipped his tal and studied the map on the table. "The first temple to the Mockery -- just imagine what secrets it must hold! But this is one ruin you'll never raid, Solas."

The half-orc roared with laughter. "I'm sure it will be dangerous, Dorilan, but we've faced far worse. I've spent more time in Xen'drik than I have in the Marches. Don't worry, my little friend -- we'll keep you safe on the journey."

"It's not my safety that worries me, or the dangers of Xen'drik. Bursting into the Preceptor's estate, spilling blood in the light of day, beating that merchant for information -- that's not how things are done here."

Solas smiled and took a deep draught of his koreshk ale. Gnomes and their sense of propriety. The funny little man wouldn't last a day in Sharn. "Why not? I haven't seen a guardsman since I arrived. I've never seen a softer city." He looked at the door. "What's keeping Kyrna and Jaral? It's been nearly an hour."

"They're both dead," Dorilan said. But he wasn't Dorilan any more.

Solas' hand flew to the hilt of his sword, but his muscles turned to ice before he could draw. He strained with all his might, but he could not move.

The gnome smiled, revealing the ivory wand she'd kept hidden beneath the table. She was younger than Dorilan, and dressed in darkweave and leather. "We believe the best guards are those that remain unseen." Silvered steel glittered as a dagger appeared in her hand.

In a world where halflings ride dinosaurs and elf raiders seek glory in battle, few people see the gnomes as a threat. The little people are scholars and shipwrights, bards and bookbinders. Zilargo is filled with color and cheer, and the common image of the Zil gnome is that of a jolly craftsman always ready to lend a hand or an ear to those in need.

But those who actually spend time among the gnomes know better. Zilargo is far deeper and darker than it appears, and the cheerful demeanor of the gnome is a carefully cultivated mask. A gnome may be no match for a half-orc barbarian in a fair fight -- but the gnomes of Zilargo seldom fight fair.

Jungle Rats

The first mention of the gnomes can be found in the records of the Empire of Dhakaan. The Ghuurash Codex provides details about the first Dhakaani campaign against the "jungle rats" that infested the coast between the Howling Peaks and the Seawall Mountains. The gnomes of ten thousand years ago were feral and primitive -- a far cry from the civilization seen today. The hobgoblin sages believed that the gnomes were rodents that had been twisted by a conduit to Thelanis, or stunted, thin-blooded wererats that had lost the ability to shift forms.

Proponents of this theory cited the small size of the gnomes, the strong instinctive bond within a family, the gnomish preference for burrows, and the racial ability to communicate with burrowing mammals.

The savage gnomes were no match for the disciplined armies of Dhakaan, and the empire spread across the region. The gnomes were enslaved or forced deeper into the wilds. But conquest was far easier than occupation. While primitive, the gnomes were masters of their environment and had a particular gift with poisons; they could not fight Dhakaani armies, but they could poison wells and ambush supply trains. While they never presented a true threat to the empire, the gnomes remained a thorn in the side of the goblin invaders for many hundreds of years.

The stalemate may have continued to this day, but destiny came in the form of the daelkyr. The extraplanar incursion crippled the empire, and the gnomes pounced on the weakened foe. In addition to physical sabotage and assassination, the gnomes began to employ the psychological techniques that would come to define their future nation. While the gnomes had yet to master the arts of wizardry, magic has always run through the blood of the gnomes. While many gnomes could summon a voice from the shadows, a few became full-fledged sorcerers, specializing in illusion. Combining magic with mundane arts of disguise and forgery, the gnomes took advantage of the shattered lines of communication in the empire to sow dissent among the commanders in the region, turning goblin against goblin and helping to ignite the civil wars that tore Dhakaan asunder.

The City-States Emerge

As the goblins pulled back, the gnomes seized cities depopulated by the daelkyr, voraciously devouring the knowledge left behind and building new civilizations in the ruins of what had come before. Slowly families joined together to form the city-states of Trolanport, Korranberg, and Zolanberg. They fought goblins in the lowlands and kobolds in the mountains, and at times they fought each other; but the gnomes always preferred to fight with guile and deception, winning conflicts with wits instead of steel. The gnomes always numbered few and felt no need to conquer the land -- they contentedly held off enemies and maintained the territory they had claimed.

But while the gnomes had no interest in expansion and colonization, they were always driven by a thirst for knowledge. At its deepest level, this is a survival instinct: The gnome knows that information is a weapon. The more he knows about an enemy, the more power he has -- and everyone is a potential enemy. Gnomes began to explore the continent, trade with the emerging cultures of Khorvaire, and learn all there was to know about land and water.

The Birth of Zilargo

The most critical moment in the history of the nation was the foundation of the Library of Korranberg. As the dragonmarks began to appear in Khorvaire, the loremaster Dorius Alyre Korran swore that he would build a fortress of knowledge -- an institute that would unlock every mystery of Eberron. This idea fired the imagination of gnomes across the region, and slowly this project became a national obsession. All three city-states donated resources to the Library, and soon the vaults began to fill with Dhakaani scrolls and the records of the first gnomes, which were carved on sticks of wood. The Library became a point of gnomish pride, and representatives of all of the city-states sat on the council of doyens.

Then came the first great wars of the Current Age. Malleon the Reaver swept the southern coast, and Karrn the Conqueror began the work that Galifar would eventually complete. The gnomes found themselves faced with twin dilemmas. Could any of the city-states stand alone against humanity? And could they trust the other city-states not to betray them? Ultimately, the leaders found one answer to both problems: Expand the alliance they'd

created with the council of doyens, and formally bind the three cities as one. After a few social experiments, the city councilors settled on the Triumvirate, and the unified nation was born. The gnomes called the new realm Zilargo, "The Home of the Wise."

Working as one, the Zil gnomes held their own against human and goblin alike. The gnomes were equally adept at working with wood and words, and they had uncovered deep deposits of gems in the Seawall Mountains. The people of Trolanport and Korranberg gained fame as sailors and shipwrights, and gnome merchants, mediators, translators, and scribes spread across the Five Nations.

The Trust

The Zil alliance did not erase the feuds of the past. The Triumvirate could not eradicate the competitive nature of the gnomes -- and in truth, the cutthroat cunning of the gnomes was a point of national pride. But since these feuds began to threaten the interests of the new nation, it became clear that something had to be done. Once more the nation looked to the Library for inspiration, drawing on the example of the syndicate established to enforce honesty among students. Each Triumvir was authorized to select agents from her own city to create a corps of secret police -- an elite force who could be relied upon to place the interests of the nation above all else. Over time, all matters of law enforcement and national security were placed in the hands of the Trust. In many nations, gnomes serve as barristers and advocates, but in Zilargo there is no court of law: the Trust punishes the guilty, and its justice is swift and merciless. It is invisible and omniscient, staffed with spies, diviners, and assassins. Any Zil citizen could be an agent of the Trust. This calling comes above friendship and family. Even when you are alone, you might be watched by an invisible spy or scrying eyes. The Zil gnomes see this as a virtue; while they have little privacy, they also have the lowest crime rate of any nation in Khorvaire. The Trust is there when it is needed and invisible when it is not; even the members of the organization know only a handful of other members. In the eyes of the typical gnome, a loss of privacy is a small price to pay for security.

The Trust acts only if something threatens society. The Zil gnomes constantly engage in blackmail and intrigue. This is a way of life in Zilargo, and the Trust acts only if the intrigues threaten the security of the nation or cause laws to be broken. For example, if a blackmailer forces jis victim to give him a lucrative shipping contract, no harm is done; the wealth still remains in the nation. On the other hand, if the blackmailer forces his victim to commit a murder, steal a rare book from the Library, or give secrets of elemental binding to House Cannith, the Trust intervenes quickly.

This raises the following issue: If the Trust is so powerful, how can adventurers get away with anything in Zilargo? First, the Trust does not interfere unless Zil citizens are threatened. If a party of adventurers is chasing a Brelish fugitive -- well, provided that the adventurers don't disrupt the lives of Zil citizens in their hunt, they are free to do as they will. Of course, if the fugitive finds refuge in the home of a doyen, the adventurers need to find a way to extract the target without harming the household. Second, as noted earlier, intrigue isn't necessarily a crime. And most importantly, the Trust is not as omniscient as it wants people to believe. Anyone could be an agent of the Trust -- but not everyone is. Careless criminals and adventurers who think that they are above the law may be cut down to size by the Trust. But if the party acts carefully and cautiously by planning out its steps and taking advantage of disguise and abjuration magic, they can escape even the eyes of the Trust. Adventurers still can accomplish their goals in Zilargo -- they just need to use their brains instead of relying on sword and *fireball* to solve all their problems.

Galifar to the Present Day

The Zil gnomes have never sought to build empires; instead, they have always insinuated themselves into the nations of others. In the Mror Holds, the gnomes do much of the actual work of the banking industry. Gnome

merchants and sailors have a strong foothold in the Lhazaar Principalities, and they live and work in coastal communities across Khorvaire. In Breland, gnome crafters and engineers labor closely with the centers of industry. In Aundair, Zil sages hold key posts in the Arcane Congress and the University of Wynarn. The message stations of House Sivis are the key to international communication, and the Korranberg Chronicle is the most trusted source of news on the continent. Gnomes are everywhere, and they are almost always overlooked. But few realize the tight bonds of family -- and this is what gives the gnomes their power.

Next Week: Playing a Zil gnome!

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of **Eberron** to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

The Gnomes of Zilargo, Part 2

By Keith Baker

"Five words can defeat a thousand swords."

-- Zil proverb

National Character

Some have compared the Zil gnomes to social rodents. The gnomes are happiest in groups. They are energetic and highly industrious, and they prefer to avoid conflict with larger creatures. But like rats, gnomes are survivors. Stealth, deception, and pure tenacity are the tools of the gnome -- and when cornered, a gnome can be a surprisingly dangerous foe.

The streets of Zilargo are bright and cheerful. The gnomes are helpful, attentive, and usually willing to lend an ear to the troubles of a traveler and a hand to those in need. Sometimes this is just what it seems. But the Zil gnomes are schooled in deception from childhood, and, all too often, their good cheer and friendly demeanor is an illusion. The Zil character has a paranoid streak, and the helpful nature of the Zil gnomes is rarely altruistic. While the gnomes are curious by nature, that curiosity is often fueled by the desire to gain leverage over every possible enemy. If you tell a gnome your problems, he may or may not help you. If he does, you owe him a favor. If he doesn't, he has learned about your weaknesses -- and in the eyes of the Zil, all information has value.

It would be an exaggeration to say that every Zil gnome is a ruthless schemer. While cunning and cautious, the Zil are people like any other. While some are cold-blooded opportunists, others do enjoy helping others. But even a goodhearted gnome may rely on manipulation and deception to accomplish his goals.

While energetic and cheerful, the gnomes are not childish or foolish. They are masterful merchants and negotiators, and they are adept at setting others at ease and weaving words into a pleasing tapestry. The people of Zilargo see language as an art, so Zil gnomes are typically well-spoken and sophisticated. Even a gnome farmer or miner has training in conversation and debate. The typical gnome is not a clown or a source of comic relief -- unless it suits her purposes to have others see her that way.

Games of Wit and Wisdom

The Zil gnomes love games of strategy, but their favorite pastime is intrigue. The seemingly dull farmer could be involved in a dozen plots. Often these plots are tied to a local community: feuds to shift the balance of power between families, attempts to influence local romances, or economic schemes. Two gnomes may engage in a shadow war to acquire a certain rare book, not because either truly cares about the book, but as a game -- a test of cunning and wit. But beyond these innocent pastimes, the waiter at the bar could be working for the Trust, the Aurum, the Korranberg Chronicle, or any number of other cabals with international goals.

Beyond his personal schemes, every Zil gnome has a bond to his family and his clan, and each has its own economic and political goals. Business contracts, mining rights, government positions, influence within a trade

guild -- in Zilargo, all of these things are determined by cunning and manipulation. As noted in Part One, the Trust intervenes only if the security of the land is threatened or if actual laws are broken. If the Lorridans and the Lyrrimans are feuding to see who will get the rights to Blackhowl Mine, the Trust doesn't care -- as long as no one is killed and the resources of the mine ultimately benefit gnomes. If the Lorridans started murdering the Lyrrimans, or the Lyrrimans made arrangements to sell the mine to House Cannith . . . that's when the Trust may get involved.

Family loyalty is immensely important in Zilargo. In a society that thrives on deception, the gnomes find it extremely important to have someone they can trust without reservation, and for the Zil this is the bond of blood. While families may fight one another for position within a clan, betrayal of a direct family member is almost unheard of and would call for bitter and vicious vengeance. Likewise, favors and debts are a serious matter in the Land of the Wise. A web of secrets, favors, and debts binds this nation together, and a gnome may be called on at any time to repay a personal favor or a debt owed by her family. Failure to comply with a reasonable request threatens the entire system and can have grave consequences. Of course, this is a two-way street; a gnome PC is expected to repay her debts, but she can also call in favors from the people she helps during her adventures.

The Role of the Bard

The Zil use the standard gnome statistics presented in the *Player's Handbook*. Their unusual culture is reflected by the fact that many gnomes who would be commoners in other nations instead possess a single level of expert, with training in Sense Motive, Bluff, Diplomacy, and a number of languages in addition to the Craft or Profession skills they use to earn a living.

A surprising number of gnomes rise above the level of expert to become bards. While gnomish entertainers are celebrated across Khorvaire, not all bards are entertainers, and many Zil bards do not have any ranks of Perform. But even without the powers of bardic music, the class reflects many things common to Zil culture. The skill selection is highly appropriate for the Zil, who focus on social, knowledge, and language skills. Bardic knowledge represents the gnomish fascination with knowledge in all forms. And the magic of the bard is an extension of the innate racial gifts of the gnome -- magic that lies latent in the blood of the race. Thus Zil chroniclers, politicians, mediators, and barristers are just as likely to have bard levels as actual entertainers.

When it comes to entertainment, the Zil gnomes love story and song above mere music, and skilled performers illustrate their tales with phantasmal forces. Musically, small hand drums and woodwinds are the most common instruments. But the trademark of the Zil master musician is the *Thurimbar rod* -- a wondrous item that enhances a gnome's innate talent for *ghost sound*, allowing him to produce any sound he can imagine. Due to the high price of the *Thurimbar rod* (2,800 gp), these instruments are usually seen only in the hands of the finest bards or as treasured heirlooms.

Zil Style and Customs

Zil spellweavers bind illusion into cloth, and the finest glamerweave comes from this land. Some tailors specialize in hypnotic abstract patterns while others weave clear images into their outfits: an evening gown might hold a breathtaking rendition of a sunset over the Seawall Mountains. Magical or no, most Zil gnomes prefer bright colors and loose, flowing designs. Hats are also popular, and a typical Zil street has gnomes wearing a plethora of different styles of headgear. Jewelry bearing both precious and semiprecious stones accentuates clothing; a gnome who cannot afford gold and gemstones sees no shame in wearing finely crafted ornaments of copper and glass.

Zil architecture is as beautiful as the clothing of the gnomes. Multiple types of wood and stone blend together to form pleasing patterns. Even the smallest communities are lit with *continual flame,* and, in large cities and metropolises, bound elementals provide heat, light, and other amenities. The gnomes go to great lengths to make their homes accessible to foreigners; in cities and towns every building have doors and furniture sized for Medium creatures as well as Small ones, and even in the villages at least one building is designed to accommodate Medium visitors. Zil houses are often filled with trappings from foreign lands -- Aereni woodwork, Sarlonan tapestries, and exotic plants from Xen'drik or Q'barra. Traditionally a guest brings a small gift to repay a host for his hospitality, and this often becomes a form of competition. A wealthy gnome might send a party of adventurers to Xen'drik to recover a piece of art from the Age of Giants, purely because she wants to present it at a party.

Gnomes use *prestidigitation* to maintain their personal appearance and to keep property clean; as a result, the streets are unnaturally bright, colors remain remarkably vivid, and the gnomes themselves have impeccable hygiene. Even in filthy foreign cities, a gnome takes pains to maintain her appearance, and a dirty gnome probably isn't from Zilargo. Likewise, ragged adventurers may be barred from certain Zil establishments and events unless they are properly groomed and attired. Gnomes also have a keen sense of smell, and scent plays a significant role in Zil fashion; men and women alike make use of perfumes and oils, many so subtle that humans can't even smell them. A social "language of scent" allows a gnome to indicate her current status -- seeking companionship, conversation, solitude, help, and so on. A gnome can recognize the intent of a scent by making a DC 10 Wisdom check and a DC 15 Knowledge (local) check. Other creatures with enhanced senses -- such as a shifter with the Wildhunt ability -- can identify these scents, but unless raised among gnomes they cannot deduce the social meaning of the smell.

The gnomish sense of smell and talent for *prestidigitation* are also reflected in Zil cuisine. The Zil gnomes make use of a wide variety of subtle spices, including certain flavors that can be produced only through *prestidigitation*. One of the most common beverages in the land is maleko, which is chilled water infused with faint traces of flavor; visitors are often baffled by the gnome who passes up a tankard of ale to savor a glass of water.

Artifice, Alchemy, and the Arcane

Magic runs through the blood of the gnomes -- a faint gift of illusion that some attribute to the distant touch of Thelanis. Many gnomes develop this talent without formal training. Levels of bard or sorcerer reflect this, and the gnomes typically focus their studying on enchantment, illusion, and conjuration spells. The insatiable curiosity of the gnomes has led to the pursuit of artifice and arcane magic. Zil artificers are justly famed, but House Cannith possesses the most gifted artificers in Khorvaire, and Arcanix is still the greatest seat of wizardry. But Zil gnomes are unsurpassed in two fields: alchemy and elemental binding. Some say that the Zil wrested the secrets of elemental binding from the ruins of Xen'drik, and they jealously guard this secret. No rule in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* book stops a PC of any race from taking the Bind Elemental feat. However, a DM may require a PC to acquire this feat in Zilargo or Xen'drik. In addition, the Zil gnomes consider this knowledge to be a national resource. An adventurer producing an occasional suit of elemental-bound armor is left alone, but if a PC starts producing airships and thus threatening the Zil monopoly on the art, he may be targeted by agents of the Trust.

Questions to Ask

When you play a Zil gnome PC or NPC, consider the following:

- What is your relationship with your family?
- Are you involved in any long-term intrigues? Who are your enemies and rivals?

- What form does your curiosity take? Are you trying to gain influence? Arcane knowledge? Or do you simply want to visit new lands and meet interesting people?
- Conceal your feelings from all but your closest friends. Feign whatever emotions suit the needs of the moment -- but only your most trusted allies should ever see your true face.
- A Zil gnome almost always seeks to avoid direct physical combat. Is there a way to resolve a conflict without resorting to violence? If not, how can you maximize your advantages against the enemy? To the Zilfolk, a fair fight is a fool's game.
- Language is an art. Never use one word when you could use two, provided those two are clever and witty.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

Monastic Orders

By Keith Baker

Most of the religions presented in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* maintain monastic communities, where the faithful live ascetic lives of contemplation and honor the gods with their prayers and works. Many of the religious texts of Eberron are produced in such monasteries, and relics of the faithful are hidden away in monastic vaults. The majority of these devotees are experts who are trained in Knowledge, Craft, and Speak Language; Sense Motive, Diplomacy, Heal, and Forgery are also common.

But "monk" has a second meaning: an ascetic who devotes her life to physical and mental discipline. Religious monks make a spiritual devotion of physical perfection, chastising the body through harsh exercise. These monks are champions of the faith who rely on martial skill instead of the divine magic of the cleric.

Not all monastic orders are religious in nature. The goblin sharaat'khesh and Valenar Jaeldira pursue martial perfection for its own sake. These monks are swift and deadly warriors -- assassins who slip through the night and swordsmen who dance across the battlefield.

Many monastic orders exist, from the Mironites of the Silver Flame to the Tashalatora of Adar. This article examines three different traditions: The Order of the Broken Blade, the Flayed Hand, and the sharaat'khesh.

The Order of the Broken Blade

"Lord of strength and steel, guide my hand!"

The name of this order is drawn from the legend of Kalan Desh, a devotee of Dol Dorn who ventured into the Byeshk foothills to rescue a kidnapped child. Three ogres attacked Kalan -- they sundered his sword and mocked him. Kalan called on Dol Dorn for guidance, and miraculously he slew the ogres with only his hands, feet, and the hilt of his shattered sword. In gratitude, he founded the first monastery of the Broken Blade, where others might honor Dol Dorn and master war in all its forms.

Dol Dorn stands between his honorable sister Dol Arrah and the treacherous Mockery, patron of assassins. He may inspire any combatant who relies on skill instead of deceit. For a Broken Blade monk, combat is both meditation and art -- a monk finds union with Dol Dorn through battle. After attaining the rank of swordbrother, a Broken Blade monk wanders the world. While many of these monks protect the weak and innocent, others join in any struggle they find. Occasionally, Broken Blades may fight on both sides of the same battle. The ultimate goal is to attain enlightenment through conflict, and the cause of the battle and the consequences of its outcome are a secondary concern.

Organization: The majority of the inhabitants of a Broken Blade monastery are initiates. After passing grueling mental, physical, and doctrinal tests, an initiate is granted the title of swordbrother (or sister). If he masters body and blade, a swordbrother can return and claim the title of blademaster. The blademasters instruct the initiates and manage the monastery under the direction of the abbot.

Initiates are typically 1st-level monks. Traditionally, a swordbrother must possess Whirling Steel Strike and at least 5 ranks of Knowledge (religion); however, in a campaign where PCs start at first level, the DM may wish to grant a player the honorary status of swordbrother to justify his wandering. There is no level-based prerequisite for the rank of blademaster; claiming such a position is a matter of devotion and skill, requiring the judgment of the other blademasters and the abbot.

The Karrnathi line of House Deneith has a close relationship with the Order of the Broken Blade, and a number of distinguished swordbrothers are among the Blademark and the sentinel marshals.

Monasteries: The primary monasteries of the Order of the Broken Blade are located in Karrlakton (Karrnath), Rekkenmark (Karrnath), and Starilaskur (Breland). Smaller monasteries are scattered across the Five Kingdoms, and the order has recently established an outpost in Krona Peak (Mror Holds). Broken Blade monasteries are austere, fortified buildings. Every monastery contains a forge; to attain the rank of blademaster, a monk must forge his own sword.

Character Development: Monks of the Broken Blade divide their character levels between fighter and monk, combining monastic discipline with swordsmanship. This dual discipline requires the use of the Monastic Training feat, which is described in the *Eberron Campaign Setting.* Monks are also encouraged to learn the following feats: Improved Critical (longsword), Weapon Focus (longsword), and Whirling Steel Strike. Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Disarm, and Quick Draw are also common disciplines. Broken Blade training emphasizes physical skills such as Balance, Jump, and Tumble.

The Flayed Hand

"Embrace the path of pain."

The Mockery is the lord of pain and vengeance -- the deceiver who destroys. His monks embrace suffering; through ritual torture, they overcome weakness of body and mind. As part of this training, a monk flays strips of her skin, treating the muscle below with an alchemical substance that toughens it. This excruciating torment permanently marks the monk as a follower of the Mockery.

Once an initiate has learned to endure pain, she is taught to inflict it. The monks of the Flayed Hand are master torturers and deadly warriors. A monk of the Mockery seeks communion with her god through violence and treachery. Many members of the order sell their services as mercenaries and assassins. Others cause pain in more subtle ways bydestroying hopes and dreams instead of spilling blood.

The Flayed Hand is a secretive order, and a student of the Flayed Hand usually conceals her devotional scars. A monk dressed for battle is a grisly sight; the members of the order keep scraps of their victims' skin and craft their battle-robes from the flesh of the fallen. Some say that the masters of the order know how to capture a victim's knowledge in his skin, or to craft leather masks that allow a monk to adopt the appearance of her victim. Any priest of the Sovereign Host or Dark Six automatically recognizes the significance of the marks of the Mockery; other characters can make a successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check or bardic knowledge check (DC 20) to see if they have heard of the Flayed Hand.

Organization: Three ranks exist within the Flayed Hand, and all monks of a particular rank are considered equals. The lowest level is that of the initiate, who is still studying the mysteries and earning the marks of the Mockery. Once a monk survives the flaying and masters the arts of pain, she has earned the rank of excoriate.

An excoriate who settles in a monastery is known as an archimandrite.

Initiates are typically 1st-level monks. Excoriates are generally distinguished by possession of the Flensing Strike feat, but a PC who chooses to follow the path of the Mockery (a somewhat disturbing choice) may have earned the title of excoriate at 1st level.

Monasteries: The primary monasteries of the Flayed Hand are located in the Great Crag (Droaam) and Rukhaan Draal (Darguun). In other lands, the monasteries of the Mockery are small and carefully disguised, and the archimandrites are always prepared to evacuate on a moment's notice.

Character Development: Followers of the Flayed Hand put great emphasis on stealth, and many become assassins at 6th level or above. While it is not a class skill, Disguise is very important to Flayed Hand monks, both for subterfuge and to conceal the marks of the Mockery. The trademark feat of the order is Flensing Strike, which requires Weapon Focus (kama). Other traditional feats include Stunning Fist, Two-Weapon Fighting, Dodge, Combat Expertise, and Improved Trip.

A Flayed Hand monk adds Intimidate to her list of class skills. However, while her devotional marks are visible, she suffers a -2 circumstance penalty on Diplomacy or Gather Information checks.

The Shaarat'khesh

"Even the smallest blade can slit a throat."

"Shaarat'khesh" is a Goblin word that translates to "silent knives." The shaarat'khesh are an order of goblin spies and assassins. This order can trace its roots back to the ancient Dhakaani empire. At the height of the empire, the shaarat'khesh served as the hand of the emperor, bringing silent death to traitors and criminals. Once the empire fell, the shaarat'khesh became mercenaries, selling their services to any warlord with gold. As the Dhakaani age came to an end, the Silent Master called upon the shaarat'khesh to withdraw into the depths of their mountain fortress, leaving the remaining warlords to squabble over the ruins.

Now, thousands of years later, the Heirs of Dhakaan have reemerged -- and the shaarat'khesh have returned with them. For the past century the goblins have been studying the nations of modern Khorvaire, moving among city goblins and establishing safehouses across the land. All of the clan lords rely on the shaarat'khesh for information, and many have sought to win the allegiance of the assassins. But the Silent Master has maintained a position of neutrality. The shaarat'khesh are the servants of the empire. But until the clans unanimously agree on an emperor, the silent knives treat all clans equally and demand payment in gold. The shaarat'khesh do not accept every contract; as a rule they do not assassinate Dhakaani clan leaders or dirge singers. But once the silent knives take an assignment, they see it through to the end, even if this means fighting other members of the shaarat'khesh. It is this impartiality and dedication that has allowed the clan to survive amid the warring heirs.

The Dhakaani are an agnostic people, and the shaarat'khesh have little interest in gods or arcane mysteries. A goblin initiate seeks to become the perfect living weapon: swift, silent, equally deadly with fist and blade, whose focused mind can overcome any weakness of the body. While he may feign emotions when it serves his cause, a silent knife is cold and calm, and he always remains focused on his next task.

As a general rule, a goblin must be born into the clan of the shaarat'khesh to learn the ways of the order. However, exceptional goblins have been adopted by the clan, and they even have a few members of other races -- most notably changelings.

All Dhakaani goblinoids know of the shaarat'khesh. Other characters must make a successful bardic knowledge or DC 25 Knowledge (history) to see whether they have heard of the order.

Organization: A student of the silent arts carries the title of shaarul (*dull blade*). Upon completion of his training, the monk takes the title of tar'khesh (*silent hand*) or il'khesh (*silent eye*), depending on whether his primary focus is combat or espionage. Monks with assassin levels are known as mula'duur (*bringers of sorrow*). Clan decisions are made by a council of elders; the leader of this council holds the title of guula'khesh (*silent master*).

Shaaruls are generally 1st-level monks. To attain the title of tar'khesh or il'khesh, a character must be a 2nd-level monk or 1st-level monk/1st-level rogue with 5 ranks of Hide and Move Silently.

Monasteries: The il'khesh have spread across Khorvaire over the past century, and the silent knives have eyes hidden in many of the great cities of the Five Nations. Any city with a significant goblin population may contain a shaarat'khesh safehouse. However, only one true monastery exists: the fortress hidden deep in the Seawall Mountains, home to both the monks of the shaarat'khesh and the noncombatant members of the clan.

Character Development: The majority of the shaarat'khesh divide their character levels between rogue and monk, using the Monastic Training feat. Others follow the pure monastic path until 6th level, when they can become assassins (provided they meet the prerequisites). The shaarat'khesh rely on speed and stealth, using surprise to strike an opponent with devastating sneak attacks. Traditional feats include the following: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Feint, Monastic Training (Rogue), Skill Focus (Bluff), and Stunning Fist. Monastic skill training focuses on Hide, Move Silently, and Tumble; Bluff, Disguise, and Gather Information are also considered to be important talents.

Knowledge (local) and Knowledge (history) are class skills for shaarat'khesh monks. These take the place of Knowledge (arcana) and Knowledge (religion).

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of **Eberron** to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

The Race of Eight Winds

By Keith Baker

Sharn is a vertical city, and over the course of centuries the people of Sharn have developed a variety of sporting events that take advantage of the unique architecture of their home. Windchasers dart around the towers following elaborate racing paths, while skyblades joust far above the ground. But one event overshadows the rest: the Race of Eight Winds, which is held on the 23rd day of Lharvion. This event draws spectators and gamblers from across Khorvaire. Part race, part aerial battle, this stunning spectacle has shaped the culture of the Dura Ward -- and this event can present many opportunities for adventurers.

History and Structure

According to legend, King Galifar II was fascinated by the use of aerial scouts and cavalry. Some say that he used Sharn as a testing ground to judge the merits of different flying beasts, granting land and gold to exceptional cavaliers. Over the centuries, this evolved into an exotic race involving different sorts of magical and fantastic beasts. For purposes of the race, Dura is divided into eight regions, each of which is represented by a different creature. To this day, the name of the creature is often used as a slang term for the inhabitant of one of these areas; when someone talks about "that treacherous owl," he's probably referring to a resident of Rattlestone or the Bazaar.

The race itself is a test of speed and skill, challenging the reflexes and combat skills of both beast and rider. From the starting point in Hareth's Folly, the race takes competitors on an intricate course that weaves in and around the towers of Sharn -- and since contact is allowed between riders and beasts, the racers can always try to win by eliminating the competition.

The race is older than most of Sharn, which explains why much of Upper Dura is not represented; it literally didn't exist when the tradition began. Hareth's Folly and Hostelhome have always been neutral ground where people gather to watch the race.

While not everyone takes an interest, many of the inhabitants of Lower and Middle Dura are avid followers of the Race of Eight Winds. It brings people of all races and professions together, and those directly involved with the race are the heroes of their districts. This includes the riders and handlers, along with the Wind Guard -- a committee appointed to manage the interests of the region. While this is a great honor, it carries considerable responsibility: there is far more to the Race of Eight Winds than just skill in the air. The Wind Guard has to raise funds to acquire, maintain, and train the exotic beasts used in the competition. Usually local merchants donate a share of their profits to support the race, but it is up to the Wind Guard to make up for any shortfall. In addition to finances, the members of the Wind Guard engage in a never-ending series of schemes and negotiations on behalf of their region. Alliances and networks of favors stretch back for centuries, making the race as much a match of politics as of speed. The owl is one of the slowest creatures in the race, but the Bazaar has a powerful economic position and often uses bribery and graft to get ahead. The griffon rarely tries to win, instead using its physical power as a bargaining chip throughout the period between races; even if the griffon can't win, it can usually take another creature out of the race. Of course, it may be that the hawk owes a favor to the owl, and repays that favor by asking the griffon to cripple the pegasus -- and this is a fairly simple example.

The Rules

Traditionally, each region enters a single beast and rider in the race. However, if a region makes a 250 gp donation (which goes into a general treasury to offset the cost of the land grant), it may enter a second contestant. While this is rarely done, it is the primary way for outsiders -- such as player characters -- to enter the race. A would-be contestant would need to negotiate with the Wind Guard and find a region that willingly lets her participate under their banner.

The race itself is a dangerous event. Full contact is allowed between beasts and riders, and beasts can use any natural weapons that they possess. Riders cannot use spells, psionic disciplines, dragonmarks, magic devices, or alchemical items, and anyone who breaks these rules is immediately disqualified and exposed to mob violence. A rider is allowed to carry a sporting crossbow and a dozen quarrels; this is similar to a light crossbow, but it has an 80-foot range increment and deals only 1d3/1d4 damage. This allows for entertaining conflict while preventing swift kills.

The victorious rider receives a 500 gp purse and a small parcel of land -- while the Wind Guard of the winning region lays claim to the *Rod of Eight Winds*. This mysterious item is a major artifact recovered from the depths of the city long ago; some say it is linked to Syrania and projects the effects of a manifest zone within a short distance. However, few of the people of Dura have any interest in the rod's history or powers. What matters is its current role as the symbol of Dura's pride -- and each district is desperate to claim it.

Using the Race of Eight Winds

The Race of Eight Winds is a massive sporting event that draws interest from across the continent. It could impact an adventure in a number of ways.

Local Color: Each creature is associated with a particular region within Dura. As the race draws near, visitors see banners displayed across Dura, and people dress in the colors of their beast. Passing adventurers may be invited to a meal and called upon to toast the health of the local beast, or an adventurer who coincidentally happens to be wearing the wrong colors may spark a brawl. This can provide a way to introduce new NPC enemies or allies, or simply add depth to the description of a scene.

Participation: A skilled rider may want to enter the race himself. The character needs to gain the sponsorship of one of the regions; he is more likely to gain the acceptance of one of the slower beasts than the hippogriff or pegasus, who win all the time and want to preserve the fame of their local riders. Winning the race makes the character a landowner, which could be interesting; it also makes him a local celebrity in Sharn, which could open the door to many other opportunities.

Troubleshooting: Someone has poisoned the local griffons, and the Wind Guard of Precarious have only three weeks to find a replacement: Can the party find a wild griffon in time? The race is in one week, but the *Rod of Eight Winds* has been stolen; can the adventurers recover the lost artifact? The PCs are asked to provide security for the pegasus -- which seems like an easy task until Daask gets involved. A friend of the party loses a fortune gambling on the race, and the Boromar Clan is threatening her life: Can the PCs help? If the characters are unscrupulous enough, they may even be hired to cripple racing beasts to skew the odds!

The Beasts

Looking to add a little color to Dura? Here are the eight beasts traditionally used in the race, along with the districts they represent.

The Eagle: The districts of Broken Arch and Stormhold support the giant eagle, whose colors are brown and gold. Stormholders are especially passionate about the race, even though the eagle rarely wins. Many Stormholders take pride in being fierce and noble like the eagle, and they rarely participate in the politics and intrigue that often affect the final outcome of the race. They are especially dismissive of the other birds of Middle Dura; the hawk is a lesser eagle, while the owl is treacherous and far too clever.

The Gargoyle: Fallen and Malleon's Gate were originally represented by the dire bat. As immigrants from Droaam came to Sharn, most settled in the Cogs or Malleon's Gate. Twelve years ago, the region of the bat made an unprecedented change and shifted their regional beast to the gargoyle, whose colors are black and gray. Currently, the region is represented by Carralag (N male gargoyle rogue 4), a remarkably clever gargoyle with the Manifest Flight feat.

The people of Malleon's Gate are fiercely dedicated to the event. The violence appeals to the Darguuls, while the city goblins love the chance to compete against the elitist folk of the upper levels. While the gargoyle has yet to win the race, it has had greater success than the bat, and this has brought increased support for Daask and the Droaamites within the district.

The Glidewing: This flying dinosaur represents the districts of Gate of Gold and the Stores, and its colors are gray and green. The glidewing is extremely popular among the halflings of Sharn, and some say that the Boromar Clan is the financial force behind the Glidewing Wind Guard.

The Griffon: This powerful beast represents Precarious and Oldkeep, and its colors are brown and red. During the race, red ribbons are usually tied to the forelegs of the griffon, giving the impression of streams of blood coming from its claws. The people of Precarious are fanatically (and often violently) devoted to the race, although many don't care if they win or lose; as long as the griffon brings down one of the other beasts, they consider it to be a victory.

The Hawk: Tumbledown and Underlook are represented by the dire hawk, whose colors are light brown and dark brown. The hawk rarely wins, but Underlook makes considerable profits off the tourist trade and most Tumbledowners are devoted followers of their underdog champion.

The Hippogriff: Daggerwatch and Overlook are represented by the hippogriff, whose colors are white and gold. The Goldwings (the aerial division of the Sharn Watch) are based in Daggerwatch, and a Goldwing officer typically represents the district in the race. The hippogriff has one of the best records in the race, rivaled only by the pegasus.

The Owl: The giant owl is the beast of Rattlestone and the Bazaar, and its colors are brown and gray. While it is one of the slowest creatures in the race, the owl is famous for manipulating the outcome of the race with intrigue and diplomacy. While many of the inhabitants of Dura speak dismissively of "two-faced owls," the merchants, con artists, and pickpockets of the region take pride in their mascot's cunning, and a strong streak of carefree pragmatism runs through these districts. A few former racing owls are now merchants themselves, which can lead to unusual encounters in the Bazaar.

The Pegasus: Highwater was the last district to join the Race of Eight Winds. Thanks to House Vadalis, Highwater is represented by the pegasus, whose colors are white and silver. The pegasus is the swiftest

creature in the race, and it has brought Highwater to victory time and again. The people of Highwater are proud folk and are always willing to discuss the ways in which a pegasus is superior to the other beasts. However, success has its price. The other districts often team up to bring down the pegasus at the start of the race. And outside of the race, many of the inhabitants of the lower wards despise the people of Highwater; thieves and bullies will go out of their way to target a snooty pegasus supporter.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of **Eberron** to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

The Draconic Prophecy

By Keith Baker

The scrying pool was a mirror of the sky, and the glittering Ring of Siberys stretched across its surface. Tielanthraxa whispered and the image grew, moving closer and closer until she could see the individual stones that made up a particular section of the ring. The shards were silhouetted against the lunar sphere of Rhaan, and the image was unmistakable: Khyber's Claw, surrounded by the light of the crimson moon.

The dragon hissed in frustration. For days, she had watched the signs appear in the heavens, cross-referencing the omens with the Codex of Alaraxus and the movement of smoke and water. This was the final piece in the puzzle. The Lord of Fire would rise again in the City of Illusions, and only three could return him to his prison: the child of storms, the shaper of steel, and the hand of the Keeper. Tonight she would head to Khorvaire; tomorrow she would begin the search for her soldiers of destiny.

The most ancient legend is the tale of the three progenitor dragons: Khyber, Eberron, and Siberys. Some say that Khyber slew Siberys, only to be bound by Eberron; the three dragons became the world (Eberron), the darkness within (Khyber), and the ring in the sky (Siberys).

Most people are familiar with this legend; most religions commonly accept it, with other deities and powers rising in the age that followed. But few tales explain the reason behind the legend. Some scholars say that Khyber and Siberys learned of a secret tied to the fate of the universe itself, and that they fought to control this power.

No human knows the truth of this legend. But the dragons of Argonnessen are far older than humanity. They are the true children of Siberys, and they have devoted tens of thousands of years to studying the ancient mystery -- the Draconic Prophecy.

While the Prophecy illuminates the future, it rarely presents a single path. Take the example at the beginning of this article. After considering various signs, the sage Tielanthraxa concludes that "The Lord of Fire will rise again in the Demon Wastes, and only three can return him to his prison." Only three people can defeat the demon described in this piece of the Prophecy. However, the Prophecy doesn't say whether they SHOULD defeat the demon -- only that they can. Most dragon scholars collect this knowledge but do not act upon it; the elders believe that the purpose of the draconic race is to chronicle the Prophecy. The younger dragons of the Chamber wish to shape the future, but they don't always agree on the path it should take. As a result, one faction within the Chamber may try to guide the three destined warriors in the defeat of the demon. Another may work to handicap the three; these wyrms have unearthed a different passage in the Prophecy that ties to the demon, and the dragons want the fiend to remain free until this prediction has come to pass. Neither faction cares about the demon, or for that matter the warriors; the main questions are who controls the future and whose interpretation will become fact.

This allows the DM some latitude when using the Prophecy to drive a storyline. According to the Prophecy, the player characters are the only people who can defeat this rakshasa rajah. But this particular example doesn't say exactly how or when they will defeat it. This sets the wheels of adventure in motion -- but leaves room for interpretation and failure. If the party fails in their first attempt, they'll simply have to try to come up with a new approach. Perhaps they can't beat it alone -- but they can play a key role in uniting the Church of the Silver

Flame and the paladins of Dol Arrah against this common foe. The DM must decide how detailed the relevant section of the Prophecy is -- which in turn determines how creative the party can be while still fulfilling the needs of destiny.

Pieces of the Prophecy

No character -- or Dungeon Master -- will ever find a complete text of the Draconic Prophecy. Through interaction with the Serens and dragons themselves, sages have learned that the dragons do have dragonshard texts recording pieces of the Prophecy, the most notable of which are the *Codex of Alaraxus* and the *Talash Siberys*. However, to a large degree, these are accounts of events that have already come to pass or incomplete fragments that are useless on their own. The keys to completing these fragments are written on the world. The Prophecy unfolds in the sky -- in the movement of stars and shards. It reveals itself in the depths, when strange markings are found on the walls of chambers untouched by any living creature. And these are simply the most obvious signs. A dragon sage may draw inspiration from the whispering wind, the patterns of an avalanche, or the shifting sands of a desert. The level of complexity is almost unfathomable to the human mind, and even for a wise and cunning dragon it takes centuries to learn to read these signs.

Over the past three thousand years, the Prophecy has found a new canvas: the inhabitants of Khorvaire. The dragonmarks resemble the designs that previously appeared only in bones of the world: on cavern walls and ocean reefs. Dragon sages have devoted millennia to determining the meaning of these manifestations. Some believe that each house has a role to play in the Prophecy, while others see each dragonmarked individual as representing a specific variable. A member of the Chamber who is attempting to enact a particular passage of the Prophecy may feel that a reference to "Storm" requires the involvement of all House Lyrandar, any member of House Lyrandar, or to a particular heir of the house, whom he has identified as the "Child of Storms."

Player characters may encounter pieces of the Prophecy in a variety of forms.

Translated Text: The party receives an intact (though undoubtedly cryptic) section of the Prophecy. A member of the Chamber may relate a specific passage to the party to justify her actions. A character could intercept a scroll being transported by a Seren courier -- who might be killed by Aereni spies, agents of the Lords of Dust, or even opposing members of the Chamber. In this situation, interpretation of the Prophecy could be critical to survival.

Landmarks: Before the first dragonmarks ever appeared on living beings, they appeared on the land itself. A mark could be carved into a cavern wall, a coral pattern shaped as a mark could form on the ocean floor, or the path of a twisting river could form a mark. These marks appear only at certain times and become visible only under the light of a certain conjunction of moons; a mark might even appear in a lava flow that lasts for only a few hours.

These landmarks are complex patterns that resemble the dragonmarks found on living creatures. Interpreting the general meaning of such a mark requires knowledge of Draconic and a successful DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) check. However, the deeper meaning can be understood only when it is placed in context with the geographic location of the mark, its relationship to the moons and the Ring of Siberys, and the lore collected by the seers of Argonnessen over the course of eons. When an adventure involves a landmark, the goal is rarely to translate it. Instead, the challenge will be finding the mark, duplicating it or moving it, and quite possibly destroying it before it can fall into enemy hands.

Living Prophecy: While any player character may have a role to play in the Prophecy, characters with

dragonmarks are integrally tied to it. By simply moving around the world, a dragonmarked character is serving as a living parchment. Whenever he meets another dragonmarked character, that interaction may have oracular significance. As a result, the Chamber could stage elaborate scenarios just to get two dragonmarked characters in a particular location at the same time. This is especially relevant if the party has a recurring villain or rival with a dragonmark -- perhaps an unknown destiny links hero and villain together.

False Prophecy: The Lords of Dust despise the dragons of Argonnessen, and they have had tens of thousands of years to scheme. A cunning fiend may create a false passage of the Prophecy. While an elder wyrm might see through the deception, a naïve younger member of the Chamber could be led astray, and a party of adventurers could be caught up in this treachery.

The Shapers

Many scholars have heard of the Draconic Prophecy, but many believe it of interest only to the dragons -- that only the seers of Argonnessen can decipher its many twists and turns. In fact, a number of different groups are watching the Prophecy, and any of these could be the driving force behind an adventure.

The Chamber: These dragons are the most active agents of prophecy. The members of the Chamber are determined to bring the events of the Prophecy to fruition -- even if this takes eons to accomplish. However, different factions within the Chamber may support different interpretations of a given section -- and a party of adventurers could be caught between these warring wyrms. Likewise, the Chamber has little regard for human life: Members of the common races are simply tools that the dragons are required to use. As a result, a Chamber patron may assist the party one day and send them into a death trap the next.

The Chamber has emerged only recently. Few of its members are over 600 years old, and most are considerably younger. Bronze, silver, and gold dragons are the most common agents, since the alternate form power allows these dragons to move among humans unseen, but other dragons can use *polymorph* to accomplish the same effect. The Chamber also operates through Seren agents or employs members of other races -- so not every Chamber operative will turn out to be a dragon.

The Elder Wyrms of Argonnessen: As a rule, the great wyrms of Argonnessen believe that dragons should record the outcome of the Prophecy. They willingly let the children of the Chamber push the future in one direction or another -- but if they feel that any force is truly placing the outcome of the Prophecy in jeopardy, they act decisively and with terrible force. While the elders may act directly, they also make use of Seren agents and observers.

The Undying Court: The deathless elves of the Undying Court are among the only beings old enough and wise enough to decipher the Draconic Prophecy. What remains unclear is whether the elves wish to use the Prophecy for their own ends -- or to destroy it to cripple the destiny of the dragons. This is thought to be the cause of the perennial conflicts between the dragons and Aerenal.

The Lords of Dust: These immortal fiends are the oldest beings on Khorvaire. The ancient dragons defeated the rakshasa rajahs, and the remaining Lords of Dust enjoy nothing more than interfering with the descendants of their enemies.

Independents: Flamewind the sphinx (*Sharn: City of Towers,* page 72)and Sora Teraza (*Eberron Campaign Setting*, page 166) may reveal pieces of the Draconic Prophecy to party members, setting them on a particular path. Powerful wizards like Mordain the Fleshweaver (*Eberron Campaign Setting*, page 167) or Erandis

d'Vol(*Eberron Campaign Setting*, page 186) could uncover specific fragments of the Prophecy relating to their plans. In particular, Vol could be working with rogue elements of the Chamber in her quest to restore the Mark of Death.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

Blades of the Quori

By Keith Baker

The Inspired assassin faced Silhareth in the shadowy chamber. Her mind blade glittered in the darkness -- a focused shaft of pure malevolence. "Surrender, kalashtar," she said. "You are not to blame for the folly of your ancestors. Surrender, and let your shattered spirit return to the welcoming dark."

Silhareth brought his blade up into the kal jilash guard. "You underestimate the kalashtar, souleater. My union gives me strength." He concentrated, reshaping his mind blade and shifting to a two-handed grip.

"An impressive trick from so flawed a vessel. But you have only begun to touch the power of your quori spirit, renegade." As she spoke, her blade twisted and grew, becoming a gnarled, glittering flail formed from links of razor-sharp chain. In the blink of an eye, the thoughtstealer had wrapped the chain around Silhareth's blade and pulled it from his grasp; the sword vanished as it left his hands. "And it seems you have much to learn."

War is the legacy of the kalashtar. The Inspired will not rest until the traitorous spirits have been destroyed, and to accomplish this goal they must kill every last kalashtar. The people of Adar face this struggle every day by fighting a never-ending battle against the vast armies of Riedra. In Khorvaire the power of the Inspired is limited, and this means that they must use stealth and intrigue to accomplish their goals. A Brelish kalashtar may not need to fear the Riedran army -- but anyone could be an agent of the Dreaming Dark.

This struggle has stretched out for over a thousand years, and it has no end in sight. And so those touched by the quori -- the kalashtar and the vessels of the Inspired -- are always preparing for the next round of battle.

Most quori consider weapons of steel and wood to be hopelessly crude. When the children of Dal Quor do battle, they fight with deadly thoughts. Most learn the pure arts of the psion, where they shape reality as one might mold a lucid dream. But some focus on physical combat and fight with fist, foot, or solid thought.

The Quori Monk: the Path of Shadows

Many kalashtar practice a martial art called *sheshan talarash dasyannah* -- which roughly translates to "dancing with the shadows on the path to light," or more commonly "the path of shadows." This serves as a form of exercise, meditation, combat training, and artistic expression. The path of shadows is a fluid art, full of smooth, sweeping motions that are both beautiful and hypnotic. A character that focuses on the pure movement of the dance is said to be "staying in the light," while one who trains for battle is "facing the shadows." While many who walk this path begin as monks, anyone who possesses the appropriate skills and feats can be said to be skilled in this art. Balance, Tumble, and Perform (dance) are the key skills of the path of shadows, while Improved Unarmed Strike, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, and Cloak Dance (from the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*) are critical feats. Kalashtar monks often take the Monastic Training feat, which allows the character to continue to advance on the path of shadows while studying other skills.

The Inspired do not follow the path of shadows, but they have their own monastic traditions. Different martial arts reflect the nature of each class of quori spirit -- the raw power of the du'ulora, the sly cunning of the tsucora --

and an empty vessel who trains as a monk will usually follow the path of the spirit he will one day embody.

The Quori Soulknife

The quori are spirits of dream and nightmare. Steel, stone, and wood are dull and inert; a quori prefers to work with thought and emotion. As a result, kalashtar and Inspired who embrace a martial path often take up the mantle of the soulknife.

When creating a kalashtar or Inspired soulknife, think about the appearance of his mind blade. For many soulknives, a mind blade is simply a shaft of energy. But for a quori-linked character, the weapon is an expression of the spirit within, and it should reflect on the personality and inner nature of the character. A mind blade is not bound by the laws of physics; as a weapon of pure thought it can take the appearance of a stream of razor shards, a blade of black glass, or bolt of brilliant white light. These cosmetic changes do not affect the abilities of the mind blade in any way, but they can add color to a character by helping to set the assassin of the Dreaming Dark apart from the bold paladin of the Path of Light.

Blended Paths

Soldiers of the quori typically draw on three different classes: the monk, the soulknife, and the psychic warrior. While a quori-touched character may devote herself to a single class, three traditions bind these paths together: the jilashtora, ojilashta, and tashalantora. These traditions can be found among both the kalashtar and the Inspired, and while they are bitter enemies, quori-touched characters who follow the same tradition often show a grudging respect for their foes.

The Jilashtora: "Flowing Blades"

The majority of the quori warriors are jilashtora, "flowing blades." For one of the jilashtora, thought and fist are as one, and this path combines levels of soulknife and monk. Mobility, Dodge, and Combat Expertise are common among the jilashtora, along with the Flowing Blade feat described at the end of this article. Fluid motion is the hallmark of the jilashtora, and Tumble and Perform (dance) are important skills to those who follow this tradition.

The Ojilashta: "Bladeshapers"

The ojilashta combine the disciplines of the soulknife and the psychic warrior. An ojilashta uses her psionic powers to enhance her mind blade, and she reshapes her weapon to suit the needs of the moment. An ojilashta wields a blade of dreams, which performs in ways a sword of steel never could.

While a soulknife is limited in the shape her mindblade can take, a level of psychic warrior will give the character access to the *call weaponry* power. This allows her to produce whatever weapon suits the needs of the moment -- a bow for striking a distant foe, a flail for disarming or tripping the enemy, or even a sap when a victim needs to be subdued. When an ojilashta uses *call weaponry,* it can be described as a reshaping of her mind blade for purposes of adding color to the scene, but bear in mind that the new weapon is *not* a mind blade for purposes of feats or class abilities.

Beyond *call weaponry*, ojilashta typically manifest powers that enhance weaponry or provide psionic armor. Common powers include *dissolving weapon, inertial armor, force screen, metaphysical weapon, prevenom weapon,* and *vampiric blade*.

The Tashalantora: "Fists of Fluid Thought"

The rarest tradition is that of the *tashalantora*, a path combining the physical art of the monk with the mental power of the psychic warrior. Mechanically, this is identical to the Fist of Zuoken prestige class presented in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*. While the ojilashta typically focus on combat powers, tashalantora often manifest powers that aid in stealth and infiltration, such as *burst, chameleon,* and *conceal thoughts.*

The most common martial path among the quori is that of the jilashtora, in which the discipline of monk and soulknife are woven together. At the discretion of the DM, the following feat can be used to represent this tradition.

Flowing Blade [General]

Your mind blade is an extension of your body and soul, and you wield it with the same grace as your foot or fist.

Prerequisite: Ability to generate a mind blade, Weapon Focus (mind blade), flurry of blows class feature.

Benefit: You can treat your mind blade as a special monk weapon so that you can perform a flurry of blows with it.

Special: A kalashtar or Inspired monk can select this as a bonus feat at 2nd or 6th level, in addition to the normal options available at those levels. They must still meet all prerequisites for the feat.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of **Eberron** to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

House Phiarlan, Part One

By Keith Baker

Few outsiders understand the inner workings of House Phiarlan and House Thuranni, and these houses of shadow would have it no other way. To the world at large the elves of Thuranni and Phiarlan are known as entertainers of the highest order. Those who know of the secret services these houses offer often assume that this work was adopted as a cover for espionage and intelligence, and that the house formed only after the Mark of Shadow appeared. Little could be further from the truth. The Mark of Shadow served as a rallying point, but the tradition of the houses stretches back long before the manifestation of the mark -- all the way to Xen'drik itself.

The first and most important thing to know about House Phiarlan is that most of the people of Khorvaire have no idea that the house is engaged in espionage work. The role of entertainer is not simply a cover. It is a tradition that dates back tens of thousands of years, and for many members of the houses, it is the only trade that they follow. Certainly, rumors state that the elves are spies and assassins, but to most people this is an urban legend. Where would the virtuoso soprano find the time to be a spy? She's known across Khorvaire for her talents -- do you really think she sneaks out and kills people during the intermission? In a world of changelings, doppelgangers, and rakshasa, the common folk have many other things to worry about. And if you walk into a Phiarlan enclave and ask to hire a spy, the coordinator will advise you to hire a Tharashk inquisitive. Phiarlan does possess one of the finest intelligence networks in Khorvaire, rivaled only by the Trust of Zilargo, but these services are available only to guildmasters and nobles, which are forces Phiarlan recognizes as players in the great game of politics and power.

So how do the twin paths of entertainment and espionage converge? Where did Phiarlan begin, and what role does it serve in the modern world? What caused the split between Phiarlan and Thuranni? To understand the present, let us begin in the past.

In the Beginning

The houses of shadow can trace their roots back to the Elven Uprising, the ancient war between the giants of Xen'drik and the ancestors of the modern elves. Many assume that this was a conflict between two monolithic entities, but neither elves nor giants were unified forces. Many different giant nations existed, and there were dozens of sects of elves, ranging from former slaves to guerillas who had fought the giants for millennia. Over the course of the uprising, some elves served as liaisons between the many different tribes. These travelers saw their role in war as being more spiritual than physical: Their task was to uphold morale and maintain the alliances between the scattered soldiers. They called themselves *phiarlans*, or "spirit keepers." These phiarlans learned the traditions and customs of all elven sects, and a phiarlan bard could inspire warriors from any tribe. The phiarlans were not generals or military strategists, but their motivational work and the intelligence they carried from place to place was an invaluable part of the military effort.

The Birth of Aerenal

In the end, pride, dragonfire and twisted magic brought doom to Xen'drik. In the last days of the war, a visionary leader gathered elves from across the continent and arranged an exodus to search for a sanctuary across the

water. Many of the phiarlans joined her cause, and their diplomatic skills and knowledge of the scattered tribes played a crucial role in the exodus. The journey was a long one, but the songs of the past and tales of glory helped soothe the fears of the travelers.

Eventually the elves found a new home in Aerenal, and they slowly claimed the land as their own. But in the time before the Undying Court, Aerenal was a very different realm from the ordered nation seen today. Most of the elves remained isolated in tribal communities, which ultimately evolved into the modern elven bloodlines. The phiarlans continued to serve as liaisons, working to strengthen the bonds between the bloodlines. Phiarlans would travel from court to court, performing the traditional arts of fallen Xen'drik and sharing news from other parts of the land. They also made an effort to look below the surface -- to seek out rivalries and schemes that might threaten the peace and balance between the lines. Typically a mediator would seek to settle disputes openly, but sometimes a phiarlan would quietly pass information to the parties that needed to know. This aspect of the phiarlan was well known, but accepted and even respected; a phiarlan might spy on your court, but he would only use that information for the good of the growing nation. If you had nothing to hide, you had nothing to fear; conversely, anyone who refused hospitality to a phiarlan clearly had something to hide. The reputation of the phiarlans was their shield, and their remarkable skill with song, dance, and other arts was the coin with which they paid their hosts.

The Rise of the Undying Court

Death has always been an obsession of the Aereni. Millions of elves died in the fall of Xen'drik, and the elves swore that they would never lose their heroes again. But different lines followed different paths toward this goal. The Priests of Transition studied ways to preserve the spirit beyond the death of the body. The line of Vol dabbled in blood magic and dark arts. And the Tairnadal sought to become vessels for the fallen through perfection of the martial arts.

In time, the Priests of Transition won the support of the majority of the Aereni. The path of the deathless relied on the veneration of life, while many saw the work of Vol as preying on the living to prolong the life of a few. Over the course of thousands of years, the Undying Court took form, and this served as an anchor that brought the lines together. The first conflict against the dragons cemented this unity. Following this first battle, the councilors of the Undying Court selected the first of the Sibling Kings, and modern Aerenal was formed.

With the Undying Court in place, laws were established to govern the land, and what had previously been a friendly alliance now became a true nation. In this era, the phiarlans moved from being pure mediators and newsbearers to actual spies. Tensions rose as the nation coalesced, and not everyone supported the rule of the Sibling Kings; in particular, the line of Vol rejected the teachings of the Priests of Transition. The phiarlans continued to carry the ancient forms of art and entertainment from court to court. But now family lords and the Sibling Kings paid them to monitor enemies, searching for signs of dissidence, rebellion, or feuds. While they began to take gold for these services, the phiarlans still saw themselves as peacekeepers: They brought light to the shadows so justice could find its way.

And then the dragonmarks appeared.

The Fall of Vol

The phiarlans had always been drawn from three different lines: Tialaen, Shol, and Elorrenthi. The Mark of Shadow first appeared on a member of Elorrenthi, but these lines had long mixed their blood and members of Shol and Tialaen soon manifested the mark.

Some say that the ascendant councilors of the Undying Court are among the only humanoids with the age or intellect required to study the draconic Prophecy. But living sages had made some study of the Prophecy in the wake of the dragon wars, and while the elves did not know the significance of the marks, they recognized them as playing a role in the schemes of the dragons. The elves first coined the phrase dragonmark, though few remember this. Fear followed the appearance of the marks. What was their purpose? What was the source of their power, and why had certain families been chosen? Given the long conflict between Aerenal and Argonnessen, anything tied to the draconic Prophecy was viewed with suspicion. This prejudice strengthened the bond between the three phiarlan lines, but it also pushed them away from the rest of the Aereni. The Sibling Kings quickly established their own security forces and relied on the Cairdal Blades and the Deathguard where they might have once used the phiarlans.

The rivalry between the Priests of the Transition and the followers of Vol had been building for thousands of years, and the appearance of the Mark of Death three thousand years ago simply made matters worse. The situation finally came to a head when the Cairdal Blades uncovered an alliance between Vol and a cabal of dragons. The extent and purpose of this alliance was never revealed to the public, but the Undying Court launched a full scale assault on the line of Vol. The Sibling Kings declared that the Blood of Vol was to be completely destroyed, since even a drop could destroy all living things. It was the first war between elves -- and the first time that dragons and elves sided against a common foe, since the forces of Argonnessen joined the Undying Court to destroy Vol and its allies.

This conflict shook Aerenal to its core, but in the end the line of Vol was exterminated. Some whispered that a single heir of the house, Erandis d'Vol, escaped the destruction -- but Lord Haensu of the Cairdal Blades claimed to have faced Erandis in battle and vanquished her. Still, the line of Vol had many followers who had no actual blood ties to the family, and these elves were given the choice of abandoning their vile traditions or leaving Aerenal. Many left, though not just the former followers of Vol numbered among them. Numerous Aereni believed that the shedding of elven blood had forever tainted the land, and those who bore the Mark of Shadow feared that they would be the next to suffer the fate of Vol. A handful remained, believing that it was their duty to the kingdom; these elves found themselves largely absorbed into other lines, and this mingling of blood causes the Mark of Shadows to occasionally appear in Aerenal. But most of the elves of Tialaen, Shol, and Elorrenthi fled to Khorvaire so that they could start anew. To mark their departure from elven society, they formally joined their lines into a new alliance: House Phiarlan.

Phiarlan in the Present Day

The elves had been uprooted from their home and their culture, and they intended to gain a secure position in this new land as quickly as possible. That meant amassing power. The people of Khorvaire had never seen anything to compare to the artistic skills and talents of the elves, and this sparked a renaissance in culture across the land. Elven entertainers were welcomed into every village and city, and in the process they gained knowledge and contacts. The elves of Phiarlan had spent over ten thousand years serving as the eyes of the Undying Court, and they put these skills to good use. And once they had sunk their roots deep into the land, the barons of the house contacted the other lords of the land, offering their services in exchange for gold or favors in days to come.

Today, Phiarlan's coffers are filled with gold and platinum. Its performers entertain viewers on the greatest stages and in the humblest taverns, and its eyes are watching even where no elf can be seen. Few commoners realize the true reach of the house, but kings and queens respect its power, and it is a force even the mightiest adventurers should treat with respect.

Next: A look at the public face of the House, and the services for which Phiarlan is known.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of **Eberron** to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

House Phiarlan, Part Two

By Keith Baker

Overview

The elves of House Phiarlan carry the Mark of Shadow. The house originates from an ancient order of bards, and most people know them for their ability to entertain others. But behind the curtain they run an intelligence network that stretches across Khorvaire, and most of the powers of Khorvaire have used Phiarlan services at some point in the past.

Taken as a whole, House Phiarlan is a neutral organization. Few of the Phiarlan elves are cold-blooded killers, and while Phiarlan spies frequently break the laws of the land in their work, members of the house respect the overall structure of society. To a large degree the leaders of the house see themselves as agents of balance, evening the odds between opponents and exposing feuds that would otherwise fester and grow.

The heraldic symbol of the house is a five-headed hydra. Many say that this represents the five artistic demesnes of the house. But some maintain that the hydra symbolizes the resilience and subtlety of the house: Its eyes are everywhere, and should one head fall, two will take its place. Phiarlan uses a stylized silver mask -- the "mask of shadows" -- as a secondary symbol. This is reminiscent of the golden mask of the Undying Court; members of the house may wear an actual full-sized mask, or carry a replica of the mask as a brooch, amulet, ring, or belt buckle.

The house has many enclaves, but the most significant are the Five Demesnes. Many consider the primary enclave to be the Demesne of Shadow in Sharn, which Baron Elvinor Elorrenthi d'Phiarlan oversees. However, the known enclaves serve as the centers of Phiarlan's *artistic* endeavors. No one knows where the Serpentine Table (the espionage arm of the house) has its base of operations -- this is a mystery for the DM to decide.

Each enclave has a governing council and a baron who represents the enclave on the central council, which quarterly convenes in Sharn to discuss the business of the house. Ostensibly, political position within the house is based on talent, and members of enclave councils often include the local masters of the five disciplines. But ultimately the baron makes the appointments. The central council (or the Serpentine Table) can replace a baron who is failing in her duties or performing questionably, and this council appoints new barons when an opening appears. Small outposts have no council and are governed by the nearest enclave.

Barons of the Stage

Best known for its Artisans and Entertainers Guild, House Phiarlan has hundreds of years to devote to a particular art. As a result, the masters of Phiarlan are legends in their fields; Tyasha d'Phiarlan (*Sharn: City of Towers,* page 70) is an example of a savant of the house. Phiarlan entertainers covered a vast spectrum of arts, and the typical Phiarlan enclave has musicians, actors, poets, dancers, and even professional escorts available. While the elves themselves are the primary ambassadors of the arts, exceptional members of other races can earn a place in one of the Five Demesnes and study at the feet of the elven masters. An entertainer with Phiarlan certification has an easier time finding work in his field -- however, he needs to possess at least 8 ranks in his

chosen art before he can earn such a degree.

The Five Demesnes

The elves of House Phiarlan practice hundreds of different styles of song, dance, and other arts, from the ancient traditions of Xen'drik to the modern styles of Khorvaire. Long ago, the founders of the house divided the arts into five disciplines. The greatest masters and teachers of these arts have settled in the five major enclaves of the house, which are known as demesnes. The Five Demesnes of Phiarlan and the arts associated with them are described below. Teachers of all disciplines train willing students at each enclave, but someone who wants to deal with the best in the field should travel to the appropriate demesne.

Memory. The discipline of memory encompasses the written word. Novelists, playwrights, and poets are all students of memory. Phiarlan also considers propaganda to be a fine art. A play, a novel, or a song can have a powerful effect on public opinion, and for an extra fee a Phiarlan author can produce work that portrays the client in an especially good light -- or vilifies an opponent. Many leaders make use of Phiarlan speech writers; more than one politician has hired a disguised shadow actor to give an important speech on his behalf.

The Demesne of Memory is located in the city of Fairhaven in Aundair.

Motion. The discipline of motion incorporates the arts of the body. This includes dance, gymnastics, wrestling, mime, contortion, massage, and many more. Phiarlan dancers master dozens of styles and are renowned for their grace. Exceptional acrobats and contortionists may find work with the Carnival of Shadows, while lesser tumblers often entertain the commonfolk on the streets or cheap theaters. The Serpentine Table often recruits gifted students of motion; masters of motion frequently can adapt their skills to burglary and battle. Phiarlan escorts study the arts of motion and shadow. These elves are not prostitutes, but they are graceful companions gifted in conversation, dance, and massage. Dragonmarked escorts can also use their powers to adopt specific identities to fulfill the wishes of a client. Since most people are more comfortable around elves than changelings, a wealthy man who wants the company of a particular woman may hire a Phiarlan companion to impersonate her instead of a changeling.

The Demesne of Motion is located in the city of Korth in Karrnath.

Music. The Demesne of Music teaches the arts of sound -- both song and the use of instruments. Phiarlan bards have scoured Khorvaire for musical traditions, and some instructors can teach the arts of Adaran chant and other obscure styles. Most Phiarlan bards spend some time at the Demesne of Music, though many also study at the Demesne of Shadow.

The Demesne of Music is located in the city of Flamekeep in Thrane.

Shape. The Demesne of Shape covers the creation of physical objects. One of the primary duties of the Demesne of Shape is the creation of the resources the house requires for its entertainers -- costumes, sets, props, instruments, and the like. However, the Artisans and Entertainers Guild also covers aesthetic art, and sculptors, painters, and potters can all learn their trades at this demesne. The sale of such goods is a significant source of income for the house, and the woodsmiths of Phiarlan are said to be the finest outside of Aerenal itself.

The first Demesne of Shape was located in the city of Metrol in Cyre. The destruction of Cyre dealt a blow to the house, but at the start of the war Phiarlan had spread the resources of the house across the Five Nations to avoid just such a disaster, and miraculously (some say suspiciously) all the finest teachers and artisans were

visiting other demesnes on the Day of Mourning. The new Demesne of Shape has been established in Wroat, in Breland.

While the finest artists survived the Mourning, a great deal of Phiarlan craftwork and mystical tools were lost in the fall of Cyre. The house may wish to hire a team of adventurers to venture into the Mournland and recover objects from Metrol -- or perhaps a PC member of the house could find herself performing this task as a show of loyalty to the house.

Shadow. In its broadest sense, the discipline of Shadow covers the art of deception. This includes illusion, which the house has refined into a fine art; Phiarlan dream parlors and shadow weavers use magic to produce astonishing shows. It also includes literal shadow plays and puppetry -- arts in which the actual actor performs at a distance from the audience. But the Demesne of Shadow also serves as the center for verbal arts of deception and coercion, feigned emotion, and role assumption. Actors and orators learn their craft at this demesne, and while a storyteller may learn his tales at the Demesne of Memory, he learns to deliver a tale at the Demesne of Shadow. Stealth and sleight of hand are also taught in this place, since the stagehand and the puppeteer need to hide in the shadows and avoid the gaze of the audience. Of course, while this is the public reason for such training, many of those who study the arts of stealth are actually members of the Serpentine Table -- or hope to be recruited by this inner circle.

The Demesne of Shadow is located in Sharn, in Breland. With the destruction of the first Demesne of Music, it is the oldest of the Five Demesnes and is the current home of the house matriarch.

Services and Events

In general, a well-staffed Phiarlan enclave can provide any sort of entertainment. Most Phiarlan entertainers are experts versed in a range of Perform skills. However, many true bards who can weave magic into their performances are also in the house. The house runs a number of theaters, but Phiarlan bards often work with local establishments; Phiarlan actors often take center stage regardless of who owns the theater.

In addition to these general performances, a few events of note are held by the house. The annual reenactments of the battles between the elves and the dragons are extremely popular. But the best-known work of the house is the Carnival of Shadows, which is a traveling circus that combines illusion, physical arts, and exotic beasts from across Eberron. Three separate companies of the Carnival of Shadows migrate between the major cities of Khorvaire, and they reach even the Lhazaar Principalities and the Talenta Plains. From an adventuring perspective, the carnival offers a variety of hooks. To begin with, agents of the Serpentine Table often travel with the Carnival of Shadows; this could result in adventurers coming into conflict with Phiarlan schemes when the circus comes to town, or it could mean that PCs working with the house are sent to join the carnival. The beasts that travel with the circus can also pose a challenge; an escaped monster could wreak havoc on a city, or adventurers could find themselves hired to capture an exotic creature in Xen'drik and transport it -- alive -- back to Khorvaire.

Heirloom Performances

While House Phiarlan has split off from Aerenal and has no ties to the Undying Court, the members of the house still hold the memories of their ancestors and their history in high regard. The greatest treasures of the house are the works of ancient artists -- the dance with which Jhazalaen Elorrenthi blinded the King of Fire, the song that Maenol sang as the elves boarded the boats to leave Xen'drik, and similar epic works. While every member of the house can perform some of these, many of the greatest works of the house are considered to be heirloom

performances. Only one living elf has the right to perform a particular heirloom. This is a tremendous honor, and every Phiarlan bard strives to prove her worth to inherit such a treasure. Traditionally, the bearer of the heirloom chooses her successor, but should she die without designating an heir, the council of the appropriate demesne can select a new elf to perform the art. Stories have circulated about how demesne councils assassinate unworthy heirs so the heirloom could be transferred to a superior artist -- but these stories have never been proven.

Next: The three-part coverage of House Phiarlan concludes with a look at the secret work of the house and the life of an agent of the shadows!

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of **Eberron** to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

House Phiarlan, Part Three

By Keith Baker

The Serpentine Table

The elves of House Phiarlan are known across Khorvaire as master artisans and entertainers. House Phiarlan uses a five-headed hydra as its symbol, with a head for each of the five artistic demesnes: memory, motion, music, shape, and shadow. But while the hydra has five heads, it also has a shadow -- and this represents the Serpentine Table, the sixth demesne that lies hidden beneath the surface of the house.

After the first war between Aerenal and Argonnessen, the rulers of Aerenal needed an elite force that could serve as the eyes and ears of the Undying Court. The phiarlans were already welcomed in every realm, and the Sibling Kings sought their aid. The elders of the Tialaen, Shol, and Elorrenthi lines summoned their most cunning and capable heirs to serve at the Serpentine Table. For millennia this network of observers helped maintain order in Aerenal, until the appearance of the Mark of Shadows pushed the phiarlans into disfavor. The elves brought the Serpentine Table to Khorvaire, where its roots spread across the land.

Few know where to find the citadel of the Serpentine Table, and the DM must decide where to place it in his campaign. Every Phiarlan enclave has an observer who serves as a liaison with the Table, and this person arranges jobs and ensures that the local heirs of the house do not interfere with Serpentine operations. But the actual agents of the Table are hidden even from this liaison; they are often scattered throughout the community and concealed behind layer upon layer of false identity. The true spymaster of a major city weaves her web in the shadows, and no one should ever know her connection to the house.

Not all of the spies of House Phiarlan belong to the Serpentine Table. Many independents broke away during the Thuranni feud, but a few private cabals remain -- proud families and independent adventurers who prefer to operate outside of the strict hierarchy of the house. As long as these groups maintain the honor of the house and do not interfere with Serpentine operations, they are left in peace.

Hiring the House

The artistic endeavors of House Phiarlan fill the house coffers with gold. From a purely financial standpoint, the house could survive without selling the services of its spies. But there is more to the world than gold. Kings, cardinals, and dragonmark barons rely on the Serpentine Table, and the house thrives on the influence it gains through its actions. By choosing what jobs to accept and which to decline, the Serpentine Table has the power to shape Khorvaire. Every act -- from the assassination of an upstart general to the recovery of a stolen heirloom for a wealthy merchant -- increases the power of the house. Only the lords of the Serpentine Table know how the house plans to use this power.

House Phiarlan may not rely on the Serpentine Table for its gold, but that doesn't mean that the services of Serpentine spies come cheaply. The house prefers to deal with powerful and influential people, and the blacksmith who wants to spy on his wayward wife should hire an inquisitive from House Tharashk.

Information Gathering: The hidden citadel of the Serpentine Table houses a corps of diviners, and its identity vault holds locks of hair and personal items taken from thousands of the most important people of Khorvaire. *Serpentine mirrors* empower and enhance the powers of the Mark of Shadow, and dragonmark diviners devote their time to shadow-gazing and spying through the ether. Phiarlan observers pass information to Serpentine handlers, who communicate with the lords of the Table with *scrystones*. And every day the knowledge of the house grows.

An old secret that one could find elsewhere with effort -- the name of a former king's mistress, which could also be pried from the vaults of the Library of Korranberg -- usually costs 10 to 100 gp. However, the price could go up based on the impact the secret may have. If the name of the mistress could reveal a forgotten heir who could unseat King Boranel, the Serpentine Table could raise its price a hundredfold -- or refuse to reveal it at all.

Information that can be acquired through the use of *scrying* has a base cost of 280 gp. Long-term magical surveillance generally costs 2,000 gp/day. However, the house has a limited number of focus items that can sustain extended surveillance, and this service may not be available at all times.

Beyond scrying, the Table relies on agents in the field. If a spy is already in place and can acquire the desired information without risk, a secret might cost 100 gp. A complex operation requiring a dozen of elves to put their lives on the line -- say, an extraction from Dreadhold -- could cost tens of thousands of gold pieces. Ultimately DM must decide the price based on the resources the task requires and the impact the action will have on the campaign.

Protection: A continual stream of information flows through House Phiarlan, and a client can pay a monthly fee to be alerted about any activity that poses a threat to her or relates to a subject of her choosing. Depending on the depth of the coverage, this can cost thousands of gold pieces, and few people take advantage of it. But when a party of adventurers plots against a wealthy criminal, there's always the chance that she'll receive a telepathic *scrystone* warning from House Phiarlan!

Violence and Theft: House Phiarlan has no special dispensation to break the law, and a captured Serpentine assassin will suffer the same consequences as any other criminal. Serpentine liaisons require full disclosure about the reasons driving an assignment. Assassination requires excellent justification, and the house never kills or kidnaps a client in good standing -- one of the reasons rulers prefer to work with the house instead of against it. They are more willing to abduct than kill; House Phiarlan may not kill a band of adventurers for robbing a noble, but the elves might capture the party and leave their fate in the hands of the victim. Agents of the Serpentine Table do steal from one client on behalf of another, but only with good reason -- never simply to fulfill a client's greed. House Phiarlan also perform other criminal acts under the right circumstances, but organizations like the Boromar Clan or House Tarkanan (see *Sharn: City of Towers*) are the primary sources of thieves and assassins.

The power of the Serpentine Table does have limits. House Phiarlan has spies hidden within the Aurum, Order of the Emerald Claw, or the Twelve. But the Lords of Dust, Dreaming Dark, and the Chamber are ancient and powerful forces with excellent counterintelligence. House Phiarlan can't watch every cult of the Dragon Below or every Dhakaani clan. The Serpentine Table doesn't have agents in every thorp or guild. Ultimately, the DM must decide what House Phiarlan knows and what has been successfully hidden from their prying eyes.

Serving the Shadow

Many members of House Phiarlan serve as passive agents of the house. In addition to passing information to the

Serpentine liaison, Phiarlan elves may assist the Table in many other ways. The celebrated actress may be too busy to serve as an active spy and assassin, but she can give Serpentine agents a place in her entourage -- or help a spy assume her identity for a particular mission.

A player character -- even one with the Favored in House feat -- must earn a place with the Serpentine Table. If he shows potential, the Serpentine Table asks him to serve as an observer initially. This duty calls for him to pass along information he acquires on his adventures, and it encourages him to make contacts that could prove useful to the house. In time, he is given small assignments and missions that tie into a particular adventure. On a dungeon delve, he might be asked to swap a particular piece of treasure with a forgery provided by the house and then return the true treasure to the house. He could be given a package to deliver to an innkeeper along the road, an amulet to slip into a nobleman's purse, or a *scrying beacon* to place in a critical location. If he performs admirably, he eventually may be inducted as a shadow of the Serpentine Table. At this point his missions may form the basis for entire adventures.

No membership dues exist for members of the Serpentine Table; on the contrary, agents are paid a regular salary, along with generous rewards for dangerous missions. The ranks within the house are described below. As a general rule, a Serpentine agent must have ranks in three or more of the following skills: Bluff, Disguise, Gather Information, Hide, Knowledge (any), Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Search, or Spot. Exceptions may be made for spellcasters whose magical abilities make up for their lack of training.

Shadows are the least agents of the Table. To hold this position, a character must have seven or more ranks in three of the Serpentine skills. Shadows receive 10 gp each month as a retainer in addition to bonuses for completing tasks.

Wraiths are gifted agents who often coordinate groups of shadows. A wraith must possess nine or more ranks in four of the Serpentine skills. Wraiths receive 50 gp each month as a retainer.

Spectres are elite troubleshooters. A spectre must possess twelve or more ranks in four of the Serpentine skills, and she receives 200 gp each month as a retainer.

Ghosts are the legends of the house. Only a handful of these agents exist, and their identities are carefully guarded. A ghost needs to have fifteen or more ranks in four of the Serpentine skills. A ghost receives 1,000 gp each month as a retainer and has access to many resources within the house. However, as the top agents of the house, ghosts are almost always on assignment -- a PC who rises to this rank will have little time for random adventures.

Above the ghosts are the lords of the Serpentine Table. An elf cannot rise to this position based on skill alone; she must serve the house for centuries before she can even be considered for induction into the inner circle. The lords are not necessarily as powerful as the ghosts, but what they lack in character level they make up for in cunning and wisdom.

Only elves of House Phiarlan have ever been accepted as members of the Serpentine Table, and this is unlikely to change. People of all races and nations may be used as tools and observers, but they are never treated as equals or brought into the confidence of the Table. In the case of a player character, his adventuring companions are seen as assets he brings to the house. An elf can gain status within House Phiarlan by assisting the Serpentine Table. But if he chooses to become a full agent of the Serpentine Table, he can have no loyalty above the house.

Dragonshards

The Moons of Eberron

By Keith Baker and Chris Perkins

The sky of Eberron is full of wonders. The Ring of Siberys stretches over the equator, its glittering stones standing out even in the light of day. Sages trace images of celestial dragon patterns of the stars. And twelve moons circle the planet, filling the night sky with color and light.

This multitude of moons affects Eberron in many ways. While Zarantyr has the greatest influence over the tides of Eberron, each moon has its own impact on wind and water, and lunar conjunctions can have dramatic effects that can spawn adventures. A confluence of moons can pull back the waters, revealing ancient ruins along the shores of Xen'drik. Sailors speak of maelstroms that arise when Zarantyr eclipses Aryth -- vast whirlpools that can draw a ship into the elemental oceans of Lamannia or the endless frozen sea of Risia. The sage Galeoin, who lived among the Serens, claimed that the moons influenced the tides of magic as well as water and that his barbaric hosts had learned to weave lunar power into their arcane rituals; however, the magi of the Arcane Congress have yet to find any solid evidence supporting Galeoin's claims. A Dungeon Master could certainly decide that a particular ritual, magic item, or *eldritch machine* can be completed only during a particular conjunction of moons, or that a full moon can enhance the effects of a particular manifest zone.

Each moon has an "ascendant phase" -- a 28-day period during which it is unusually bright. To date, scholars have found no natural explanation for this phenomenon, and it remains one of the mysteries of the skies. This cycle of radiance is the basis for the lunar calendar, and each month is named for the moon that is in its ascendant phase. Some stargazers claim that the ascendant moon has a profound impact on the skills and spirit of children born beneath it; a child born in the month of Zarantyr will be wild and mercurial, while a child of Therendor will be gentle and kind. Druids and rangers also believe that the ascendant moon can be a source of strength -- that a child of Dravago has a special gift for calming animals when this moon is full in the sky. A Dungeon Master who wants to embrace this idea can provide a character with a single action point on a night when his ascendant moon is full; this can be used only for an action tied to the theme of his moon.

When the dragonmarks appeared, sages were quick to note the similarities between the powers of the marks and the mythic qualities of the moons. According to popular legend, each dragonmark first manifested during the month of its associated moon. One common belief is that a child born in the month of his mark has a greater chance of developing a powerful dragonmark, and superstitious dragonmarked couples often time pregnancies to end in the appropriate month. As there were once thirteen dragonmarks, some sages believe that there is a thirteenth moon that has either vanished or simply cannot be seen with the naked eye, and the existence of such a moon has been hinted at by dragons and carvings found in ruined Xen'drik. If this moon was once visible in the sky, it vanished long before the rise of human civilization, and the common races do not know its name or place in the heavens.

The Twelve Moons
Zarantyr, **the Storm Moon**
Color: Pearly white
Associated Dragonmark: Storm
Approximate Diameter: 1,250 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 14,300 miles

Zarantyr is the closest moon to Eberron, and it has the greatest effect on the planet's tides. Superstition holds that there is a far greater chance of being struck by lightning when Zarantyr is full, and that bolts can fall from a clear sky. According to the druids, those born in the month of Zarantyr have a wild and tempestuous nature. Sometimes this translates to aggression, but it can also manifest as pure, unbridled energy; barbarians, fighters, sorcerers, and evokers may all feel a bond with the Storm Moon.

Olarune, **The Sentinel**
Color: Pale orange
Associated Dragonmark: Sentinel
Approximate Diameter: 950 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 22,500 miles

To the naked eye, the orange disk of Olarune seems to have a slight fringe that vaguely resembles the rim of a shield. The druids say that those born when Olarune is ascendant have a strong bond to community and to order, and a natural desire to protect others; superstition holds that more paladins are born in this month than any other. Scattered lycanthropes, especially weretigers, revere Olarune as a sort of demigoddess-protector.

Therendor, **The Healer's Moon**
Color: Pale gray
Associated Dragonmark: Healing
Approximate Diameter: 1,100 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 39,000 miles

Therendor is the "brother moon" of Barrakas, sharing a similar but narrower orbit with the Lantern Moon. The Serens and druids maintain that natural medicines concocted when Therendor is full and Barrakas is new are more potent than normal. Those born in the month of Therendor are thought to be gentle and empathetic; priests, mediators, and healers often have Therendor as their ascendant moon.

Eyre, the Anvil
Color: Silver-gray
Associated Dragonmark: Making
Approximate Diameter: 1,200 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 52,000 miles

When Eyre is full, a keen-eyed observer can pick out on its surface a shadowy shape that vaguely resembles an anvil. According to druidic belief, those born under Eyre inherit a solid, practical nature and a gift for nature crafts. Some smiths will wait until Eyre is full to work on especially difficult projects, and House Cannith enclaves often hold celebrations when the Anvil is full in the sky.

Dravago, the Herder's Moon
Color: Pale lavender
Associated Dragonmark: Handling
Approximate Diameter: 2,000 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 77,500 miles

Large and lavender, Dravago is a striking image in the sky. Its orbit typically keeps it at a distance from other moons, and old legends say that it is herding the rest and keeping them in motion. Children of Dravago are said

to be more comfortable with animals and plants than with people -- gifted herders, handlers, and farmers, but often awkward in social situations. Some say that stones from Dravago occasionally fall to Eberron, and alchemists have long claimed that this "purple dust of Dravago" holds remarkable magical properties.

Nymm, the Crown or **King Nymm**
Color: Pale yellow
Associated Dragonmark: Hospitality
Approximate Diameter: 900 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 95,000 miles

The golden disk of Nymm is most typically associated with royalty. Those born when Nymm is ascendant are said to be sociable and charismatic, gifted orators and con artists. The halflings of House Ghallanda frequently offer discounted rates at their hostelries on nights when "King Nymm" is in its full moon phase.

Lharvion, the Eye
Color: Dull white with black slit
Associated Dragonmark: Detection
Approximate Diameter: 1,350 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 125,000 miles

This moon features a 750-mile-long black chasm, and, when viewed from Eberron, the full disk of Lharvion resembles a slitted eye. Many superstitions exist about the baleful influence of this moon, and strange occurrences and calamities seem to happen when the Eye of Lharvion is full in the sky. The druids believe that children of Lharvion possess unnatural insights, and gifted diviners and researchers are often born in this month.

Barrakas, the Lantern
Color: Pale gray
Associated Dragonmark: Finding
Approximate Diameter: 1,500 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 144,000 miles

Barrakas is the brightest of Eberron's moons, and hunters value its light when stalking prey at night. This "sister moon" of Therendor shares a similar (if wider) orbit and occasionally seems to hide behind her closer brother. On nights when Therendor eclipses Barrakas -- "when Barrakas is shy" -- sailors worry about getting lost at sea. Those born when Barrakas is ascendant are thought to be gifted hunters, but many also believe they have a knack for clarifying things that others find confusing. The son of Lharvion sees what others cannot see, while the daughter of Barrakas sheds light on that which is already in the open.

Rhaan, **the Book**
Color: Pale blue
Associated Dragonmark: Scribing
Approximate Diameter: 800 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 168,000 miles

The smallest of Eberron's moons, Rhaan looks more like a bright star. When viewed with a spyglass, one may see a series of ridges that vaguely resemble scribblings on a page. The druids say that Rhaan empowers creative thought, and they believe that dancers, musicians, poets, and artists of all stripes draw inspiration from the Book.

Sypheros, the Shadow
Color: Smoky gray
Associated Dragonmark: Shadow
Approximate Diameter: 1,200 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 193,000 miles

Sypheros is a dim moon, and people often find it difficult to spot in the night sky. Recent observations using powerful spyglasses have confirmed that a jagged crack runs down the center of the moon, as if the moon is splitting in two. Many believe that children born in the month of Sypheros inherit a shifty, untrustworthy nature, and parents often seek to time pregnancies to avoid this month. However, the druids say that the children of Sypheros are not evil; rather, they are comfortable with the shadows and can face them without fear.

Aryth, the Gateway
Color: Orange-red
Associated Dragonmark: Passage
Approximate Diameter: 1,000 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 221,000 miles

The black dragon Vvarrak told the first druids that Aryth has a similar effect on manifest zones as Zarantyr has on tides, and that particularly weak manifest zones appear only when Aryth is in its full moon phase. Some say that those born under this moon are restless folk, driven to travel and explore; Lhazaar, who led the first great migration from Sarlona to Khorvaire, is said to have been a child of Aryth.

Vult, the Warding Moon
Color: Gray and pockmarked
Associated Dragonmark: Warding
Approximate Diameter: 1,800 miles
Approximate Mean Distance from Eberron: 252,000 miles

Vult is the farthest moon from Eberron, and some legends say that it holds back forces that lurk out within the stars. The druids say that children of Vult are practical, careful folk who generally plan ahead and prepare for the worst; when disaster strikes, the children of Vult hold civilization together. In his study of the Serens, the sage Galeoin reported that the barbarians believe that Vult "devours" the spirits of deceased great wyrms that fail to attain godhood.

Lycanthropes and the Moons of Eberron

The full moon has a powerful effect on lycanthropes -- and on Eberron, a shapeshifter may have to contend with the influence of multiple moons on a single night. A creature afflicted with lycanthropy changes involuntarily into animal form whenever one of the twelve moons is full. An afflicted creature can resist the involuntary transformation with a successful Control Shape check (see *Monster Manual,* page 303); however, for each additional full moon after the first, apply a -2 penalty to the check.

This means that an afflicted lycanthrope has to contend with the effects of the curse an average of nineteen nights of the month. Thus, rarely does an afflicted lycanthrope last a week before the curse takes hold and permanently alters her alignment.

Dragonshards

The Kobolds of Khorvaire

By Keith Baker

The black-scaled sorcerer barked a harsh Draconic syllable and a wave of invisible force slammed Daine against the wall, pinning him against the rough stone. His captor sneered, needle teeth flashing.

"Thinking to walk the deep tunnels alone and unseen," the kobold sneered. "Khyber whispers and warns, and so you are found. Dead now, by his hand."

Daine gasped in pain as the mystical bonds grew tighter, squeezing the breath from his lungs . . . .

The kobolds of Khorvaire trace their history to the dawn of Eberron. According to ancient legend, kobolds were formed from the drops of blood shed in the battle between Eberron, Siberys, and Khyber. A new generation of dragons descended from Siberys, Khyber brought forth fiends and horrors, and Eberron gave birth to the creatures of nature -- but the kobolds were already there, spawned from the first battle. True or not, this myth is the driving force behind kobold psychology and culture.

Two subraces of kobold exist in Khorvaire: the iredar (Draconic for "ones of earth"), who trace their ancestry to Eberron, and the irvhir (Draconic for "ones below") that descend from Khyber. These two races share a common appearance, but each race has a distinctive body odor that kobolds can instantly detect; in fact, a kobold can automatically identify the subrace of any other kobold within 15 feet. A character with long experience with kobolds can distinguish these scents by making a successful DC 20 Wisdom check; if the creature possesses the scent ability, the DC of this check is reduced to 10. Kobolds find the scent of others of their kind to be soothing, and kobolds that spend long periods of time away from their own kind often become depressed.

Beyond scent, the key distinction between the kobold subraces is supernatural. Kobolds produce a surprising number of sorcerers, which is a phenomenon they attribute to their supposed bond to the progenitor dragons. Irvhir sorcerers typically possess spells tied to corruption and darkness, while iredar sorcerers usually have powers of defense and binding. This is not an absolute rule, and a kobold PC can take any spell that she desires. However, an iredar kobold that makes use of spells such as *fear*, *darkness*, or *chilling touch* may be viewed with suspicion by her companions, who see these as the powers of the Dragon Below.

Stories are told of a third subrace of kobolds: the irsvern (Draconic for "ones above"), children of Siberys. According to legend, these kobolds have wings and live in hidden communities on the peaks of the tallest mountains. In 867 YK, Tolas Koln of the Wayfinder Foundation set out to recover a copy of the *Talarash Siberys* said to reside in an abandoned draconic temple in the Ironroot Mountains, andthe last entry in the expedition journal describes an encounter with winged kobolds with astonishing sorcerous powers. Some say that this is a documented encounter with the irsvern kobolds, while others dismiss it as a hoax perpetrated by Koln himself.

Outsiders often assume that kobolds are primitive and savage since they live in unmodified caverns and rely on oral tradition instead of written records. Also, they live in small tribal communities and have never come together to create cities, nations, or empires. However, kobolds are just as sophisticated as humans or gnomes. While they prefer to live in natural environments instead of creating artificial structures, kobolds have a great gift for

mining and stoneworking, and they often fill their lairs with cunning traps. But their culture is driven by tradition, and the kobolds have never sought to change or progress. They are the children of the dragons, vessels of the progenitors' will; change will come when the great dragons mandate it.

Lands: To date, kobold communities have been encountered in Q'barra and in the Seawall Mountains between Darguun and Zilargo. However, kobolds are extremely reclusive, and recent events suggest that kobold communities are hidden across Khorvaire.

Settlements: The kobolds of Eberron prefer to live in natural caverns. The irvhir kobolds make their homes deep beneath the surface, while the iredar kobolds usually live in mountain caves. The kobolds believe that these caverns are the veins of the progenitor dragons, and they often carve elaborate draconic designs on the walls. Kobolds prefer to live in tribes containing approximately 100 adults. The largest communities can have up to 600 adults. Generally, though, a community splits once its population rises too far above 100 adults, with younger kobolds moving away to found a new community.

Kobolds bond with horrid animals. Horrid creatures -- especially burrowing animals such as rats, weasels, and badgers -- are frequently found in kobold communities.

Power Groups: Kobold culture revolves around three forces. The stonescales (or ternmolik, in Draconic) perform the day-to-day tasks required for the survival of a community: crafts, agriculture, and the gathering of food when agriculture will not suffice. The claws (gix) are soldiers and hunters. And the blood seers (iejirastrix) are mystics who hear the voices of the progenitor dragons -- sorcerers, druids, and favored souls whose magical powers are seen as proof of the kobolds' divine ancestry.

Typically the chieftain of a village is an old claw, though in a peaceful region a stonescale can hold the post. The chieftain manages the daily affairs of the community while the blood seers link the communities together. Seers often travel from village to village to meet with other blood seers, discussing their visions and issues affecting the race as a whole.

One other force that has an impact on kobold culture: the Chamber. While most dragons dismiss the kobold's claims of draconic ancestry, kobold blood seers can have strange (though often distorted) insights into the Draconic Prophecy, and the Chamber occasionally makes use of kobold agents. This can result in teams of kobolds equipped with powerful magic weapons and items -- an unpleasant surprise for a group of adventurers that underestimates the little reptiles.

Beliefs: Mainstream kobold culture is oriented around the worship of a particular progenitor dragon. The irvhir tradition is one of the oldest cults of the Dragon Below, though it has no connection with the aberration-oriented cults of the Shadow Marches. The iredar kobolds revere Eberron as the source of life and nature; this is a unique druidic tradition with no ties to the sects of the Eldeen Reaches.

The kobolds see themselves as the hands of the progenitors in the modern age. And in the past, visions of the blood seers have often been tied to the Draconic Prophecy. It is a mystery, since the kobolds themselves rarely understand the significance of their actions -- but even the Chamber respects this uncanny gift.

Of course, not all kobolds are bound to these beliefs. A few tribes have split off from these traditions, ignoring the words of the blood seers. Irvhir kobolds often turn to the worship of the Shadow or the Mockery, while independent iredar revere Boldrei and Olladra.

Language: Kobolds speak Draconic. There is no evidence of the kobolds ever having possessed another language or having been taught by dragons. Most kobolds love to talk, and a meal with a group of kobolds is a deluge of yapping voices.

Relations: Most kobolds prefer to avoid contact with the outside world. Irvhir kobolds are especially xenophobic, and the miners of Zilargo have been fighting irvhir kobolds for centuries. Iredar kobolds are more moderate in their views. They have little interest in foreign cultures and fight irvhir kobolds as often as they battle gnomes or humans.

In the wake of the Last War, kobolds have had more active presence on the surface of Khorvaire. Kobold scavengers often rummage through battlefields and ruined villages. Previously unknown irvhir communities have risen from the depths to strike at weakened thorps and hamlets along the borders of the Mournland. Whether these are random attacks of opportunity or driven by the seers of Khyber remains to be seen.

Classes: Kobold soldiers are typically warriors. Kobold combat techniques focus on speed as opposed to strength, and exceptional hunters are often swashbucklers, scouts, or rangers. Clerics and adepts are rare since kobolds favor druids and favored souls. The kobolds have no tradition of wizardry, but they produce a remarkable number of powerful sorcerers. While all blood seers are spellcasters, not all sorcerers become seers. But all kobold sorcerers are considered blessed by the progenitor and usually become the champions of their tribes.

Roleplaying a Khorvaire Kobold

When playing a kobold -- either as a PC or NPC -- consider a few things first. If you are alone, why have you left your tribe? Have you abandoned the beliefs of your people, or are you on a quest? Perhaps the blood seers believe you have an important destiny to fulfill -- but it requires you to live among the warm.

Kobolds recognize that they are physically weaker than most other races, and they rely on cunning to win battles. Treacherous tactics are not shameful: They are a sign of intelligence. This applies to social situations as well as combat. When dealing with non-kobolds, a kobold lies and cheats without a second thought. Your wits are your weapons: Use them!

As a kobold, balance arrogance with caution. Your people have a divine heritage that places you on an equal footing with dragons. On the other hand, divine heritage doesn't do much when you're arguing with an angry bugbear. So flaunt your superiority when you can, but know your limits!

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of **Eberron** to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

Dragonshards

Lycanthropes and the Purge

By Keith Baker

In Eberron, the alignment of a lycanthrope is not linked to her animal form. A werebear can be evil and a werewolf can be good. Lycanthropes carrying an evil strain are some of the most terrifying creatures on Eberron: While a natural werewolf may wear a human shape, she is a born predator who takes joy in spilling human blood. Those afflicted by the disease suffer a dramatic change in personality, regardless of the alignment of the victim before and after the curse. As a result, lycanthropes of all types have always been feared. Under the best circumstances, the bite of a lycanthrope means a loss of identity; in the worst, it can make a good person into a vicious killer.

For an afflicted lycanthrope, this mental transformation is permanent. Even the strongest will crumbles before the supernatural power of the disease -- and only magical effects such as *miracle* or *atonement* can restore the former personality of the victim. A natural lycanthrope cannot be cured; the disease is a part of her body and soul, and it cannot be stripped away. The lycanthrope born into evil may find the strength to become good, but she will always feel the predator in the back of her mind, urging her to prey on the weak and innocent.

The origin of lycanthropy remains a mystery that defies even divination; *commune* and *legend lore* produce cryptic and often contradictory statements about moons made flesh and the darkness within. The sages of Arcanix and the Library of Korranberg have produced many theories, tracing the disease to the daelkyr, the Gloaming, manifest zones bound to Lamannia, or ancient druids. A more exotic theory comes from the Eldeen Reaches. A number of shifter tribes believe that the moons of Eberron are powerful spirits that watch the world below. These shifters maintain that the shifter race is not descended from lycanthropes: Rather, the first lycanthropes were formed from shifters. According to this legend, the moon Olarune sought to create guardians who could protect the world of nature; reaching down from the sky, she touched a handful of chosen shifters, granting them the power to fully assume animal form. But the moonspeakers say that a thirteenth spirit is in the sky -- a dark moon that hides its face from the world. This darkness corrupted Olarune's gift, infecting many of her chosen with madness and evil. Or so the tale is told. Shifters with these beliefs have hunted evil lycanthropes for centuries: they simply lacked the resources to eliminate the threat. While these hunters are a minority among the shifters, as a race the shifters have no great love for lycanthropes. A shifter community may take risks to shelter a good lycanthrope, but no sensible person would knowingly welcome an evil werewolf into his home.

While no one knows how lycanthropy began, most know of the purge that almost brought it to an end. Around 800 YK, the power of the curse began to grow. The scholars of Aundair sought an answer in planar conjunctions or the influence of unknown fiends, while deep in the Eldeen Reaches shifter moonspeakers bemoaned the growing power of the unseen moon. Evil lycanthropes -- always the most numerous of the shapeshifters -- became even more vicious, and many good and neutral lycanthropes were corrupted and drawn down to the darkness. Afflicted lycanthropes gained the ability to pass the curse to their own victims, allowing lycanthropy to spread with terrifying speed. By the early years of the ninth century, packs of werewolves were roaming across western Khorvaire and wererats had established warrens beneath the greatest cities of the age. Farmers lived in fear of wolves that walked like humans. What was once a superstition used to frighten children was now horrifying reality.

The Purge

The templars of the Church of the Silver Flame had fought shapeshifters in the past. But the heart of the Church of the Silver Flame was in the nation of Thrane, far from the traditional Eldeen haunts of the lycanthropes. As the death toll mounted in Aundair and Breland, the cardinals grew increasingly concerned and the templars began to take a more active role in the defense of the western lands. The puritan scholars of the Silver Flame began to study their enemies. A number of factors colored this research:

- The subjects of study were evil lycanthropes. Good lycanthropes were rare and reclusive to begin with, and many had fallen prey to the growing power of the curse. As a result, the puritans quickly assumed that all lycanthropes were inherently evil.
- Many priests noticed the similarity between the hybrid forms of the lycanthropes and the common form of the rakshasa, and asserted that lycanthropes were demons or would become true fiends in time.
- Curing lycanthropy is a difficult challenge. Natural lycanthropes cannot be cured, and an afflicted lycanthrope can be cured only if it wants to be; the shapeshifter can always choose to fail the associated Will saving throw. The first priests who sought a cure decided that it was impossible; only in the last decades of the purge did a band of more moderate and moral priests prove that it could be done.

In addition to this flawed research, the Keeper of the Flame had an agenda of his own. Jolan Sol saw the situation as an opportunity to strengthen the influence of the Silver Flame in Aundair. In 832 YK he proclaimed that the curse of lycanthropy corrupted the soul itself. This announcement spread fear throughout Breland and Aundair and strengthened the resolve of the armies of the Flame, who ventured west with the goal of eradicating the plague from the face of Eberron.

The battle was long and brutal. Today, many assume that the lycanthropes were hunted prey, fleeing from the overwhelming force of the Church of the Silver Flame. Little could be further from the truth. The typical wereboar is far deadlier than the average templar of the Flame, and even if the soldier defeats his prey, one good bite is all it takes to transfer the curse and create a new wereboar. Evil werewolves infected entire villages, and wererats took great pleasure in infecting templars, imprisoning them until the curse took hold, and then sending them against their former allies. Clever lycanthropes fanned the puritans' paranoia toward the shifters, and these mistrustful folk massacred hundreds of shifters before someone could prove to them that shifters did not carry the curse. While some of the shifters later fought alongside the templars, many have never forgiven the Silver Flame -- and, indeed, humanity -- for these deaths.

As the tide slowly began to turn in the favor of the Church of the Silver Flame, the challenge became one of finding the lycanthropes hidden among human and shifter communities. Here again, many puritans acted with overzealous aggression, harming the innocent in their desperate quest to eliminate the remaining shapeshifters. Ultimately House Medani produced dragonshard foci that could detect lycanthropes and guide the templars to the true foe, and this heralded the end of the purge. By 880 YK, the Church of the Silver Flame withdrew its forces from the Eldeen Reaches, claiming that the threat of the curse had finally been eliminated.

Lycanthropes in the Modern Age

Today, the balance of power within the Church of the Silver Flame has shifted toward the moderates, and many feel shame and regret for the actions of their predecessors. While the evil lycanthropes needed to be stopped, the paranoia and zealotry of the age led to the death of innocents. However, it did accomplish one goal: The Silver Flame did gain many supporters as a result of the purge, and Aundair is the stronghold of the puritan faction in the modern age. The puritans refuse to see the purge as anything but a triumph; most have been raised on tales of the horrors of the early ninth century. They feel no shame about the deaths of non-evil

lycanthropes or afflicted victims who might have been cured; in the eyes of the puritans, lycanthropes are monsters -- and the duty of the templar is to defend the innocent from evil, not to feel pity for monsters.

While the Church of Thrane no longer follows Jolan Sol's doctrines, the church continues to hunt shapeshifters in the present day. Jaela Daran has ordered templars to subdue lycanthropes whenever possible and to accept the surrender of any lycanthrope, so that the shapeshifter can be cured or exiled to Lamannia. However, if a lycanthrope does not cooperate, the templars use lethal force. This is covered under provisions in the Code of Galifar; the templars of the Church are authorized to defend the people of the Five Nations against supernatural threats, and a lycanthrope who willfully maintains his condition is seen as intentionally endangering others. The puritans of Aundair are infamous for ignoring Jaela's edicts, and most Aundairian templars show no mercy when dealing with lycanthropes.

While cardinals and Keeper maintain that lycanthropy is a threat, rumors have spread regarding exceptional lycanthropes who have been allowed to remain on Eberron. Some say that the Church captured a werebear who had been fighting aberrations in the Eldeen Reaches, and that the Keeper of the Flame released him into the wild after hearing his tale. Some Aundairian puritans spread gossip that declares that Jaela herself is a lycanthrope; if the tales hold truth, it could be that the Silver Flame selected her to attempt to heal the damage done in its name. Between common prejudice and the need to settle things with the Church, Eberron is a challenging setting for lycanthropic PCs. But the persecuted hero who must struggle with his own dark impulses can be a fascinating protagonist, and such a character can certainly find a place in Eberron.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

The Role of Dragons

By Keith Baker

In the Age of Demons, the couatls and the dragons joined forces to defeat the fiends of Khyber. The couatls sacrificed themselves to end this conflict, trapping the immortal demons beneath the world and leaving the dragons to rule supreme. The dragons are the last children of this first age and are the oldest civilization on Eberron. Their knowledge and power is beyond mortal measure. Few people ever encounter a dragon -- knowingly, at least. Most of the dragons have withdrawn to the continent of Argonnessen to study the Prophecy, sleep, and scheme. However, they remain aware of the world around them by relying on spies and spells to keep abreast of events on their home continent as well as the continents of Khorvaire, Sarlona, Aerenal, and Xen'drik. A handful of dragons do travel abroad, but they are usually disguised or well hidden.

The dragons of Argonnessen are a nation, not random monsters hoarding treasure and waiting for gold-hungry adventurers to seek them out. Given the dragons' secretive and reclusive nature, finding ways to introduce them into your game can be a challenge. The name of the game is ***Dungeons & Dragons***, so players may come to expect the occasional dragon encounter! This article examines a few ways in which player characters may deal with dragons in Eberron.

The Chamber

The dragons of the Chamber take an active role in the world. An adventurer in Sharn could rub shoulders with a silver dragon in a tavern -- but most likely, she would never know about this brush with draconic majesty. The Chamber is a subtle organization, and it prefers to pull strings and act through cat's-paws. The precise operations of the Chamber will be examined in more detail in a future Dragonshards article. But for now, the important thing is that while the Chamber is one of the simplest ways for heroes to cross paths with a dragon, they may never know the true nature of the encounter -- and thus, the desire to finally encounter a dragon will remain unfulfilled.

Ancient Guardians

The dragons battled the children of Khyber in the first age of the world. At the end of that battle, the greatest of the fiends were imprisoned using powerful magic. But no prison is foolproof, so the couatls and dragons placed guardians around these prisons to prevent others from knowingly or unknowingly releasing them. Unlike the demonic outsiders, dragons are not immortal, but over the millennia generations of dragons have continued to carry out the duties of their forebears. This could serve as one way for a party of adventurers to encounter a dragon in the wilds: a dragon in an ancient ruin, brooding over an ancient battleground and taking comfort in a vast hoard of rakshasa relics. Such a dragon may offer a warning to adventurers, but then again, it may not. The influence of a trapped demon or rakshasa rajah sometimes reaches beyond its prison, and many guardians become corrupted by their service; even though they continue to maintain their vigils, these sentinels become darker and more aggressive toward outsiders.

By their nature, guardian dragons cannot leave the regions that they are protecting. They rarely call attention to their presence or threaten the local populace. However, there are exceptions to every rule.

A number of guardian dragons have been mentioned in the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*. The most obvious is Rhashaak, who watches the city of Haka'torvhak in Q'barra. The local lizardfolk have come to view dragon guardians as gods, and Rhashaak has embraced this. As a result, he does wield a considerable amount of power in the region because of his lizardfolk followers. In the past he has used this influence to gain tribute and reverence, but it's possible that he will decide to do something about the growing human presence in Q'barra. Rhashaak, like many dragons his age, doesn't have much patience for expansionists or curious explorers.

The ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* hints at the presence of other guardians. Some say that a brood of blue dragons live on the cliffs of Adar, and that these powerful wyrms help those who seek refuge in the mountains. And then there is the Lair of the Keeper in the Demon Wastes. Stories say that the Keeper -- the lord of death and greed -- snatches souls on their way to Dolurrh. Certainly some deadly power lurks within this deep chasm, but many sages say that it is no god; rather, it is a dracolich, the remains of a dragon guardian infused with the power of Khyber.

A guardian dragon could lurk in any ruin or ancient site. Only bardic knowledge or ancient lore can provide a party with the tools to tell whether a dragon is a guardian that should be left to her post or a rogue wyrm that can be struck with impunity.

Rogue Wyrms

Not all dragons have an interest in the Prophecy or in fighting demons. Dragons are free-willed creatures, and they possess all of the myriad personality traits that can be found in humanity. While most are content to live in Argonnessen, a few reject the society of their own kind. Some simply wish to be alone, far from the watchful eyes of the dragon elders. Others may wish to pursue arcane experiments forbidden by the rulers of Argonnessen, or to enjoy pleasures that can be found only in human lands. Whatever their reasons, such dragons exist across Eberron. Here is the lone dragon the adventurers may seek -- the deadly creature lurking in its hidden lair, gathering a hoard in the darkness.

While the rogue wyrm may fill the image of the isolated dragon, remember the cunning and genius of dragons. A rogue wyrm not only has to worry about adventurers; it has to beware of the Chamber and other agents of Argonnessen. As long as the rogue dragon doesn't draw too much attention to itself or its activities, it is usually left alone.

Adventurers might stumble onto a rogue wyrm by accident; battling a thieves' guild, they could be taken by surprise when they discover the true power behind the organization. They could discover its hidden lair while searching for ruins. Or they could be sent after the beast, knowingly or not. Argonnessen disapproves of rogue wyrms -- and a party of adventurers could be the tool they use to eliminate an embarrassing fugitive.

A rogue wyrm is the best choice for a traditional draconic villain. No tears will be shed or demons unleashed if the creature is destroyed. But both DM and party should always consider the cunning of the dragon. Part of the creature's power is its intelligence, and a dragon rarely allows itself to be taken by surprise. Dragons are not simply monsters: They are the children of sky and earth -- the legacy of the first age of Eberron. An encounter with a dragon -- rogue or not -- should always establish the power and majesty of these creatures, and it should always be a significant event.

Ten Draconic Encounters

1. A group of NPC adventurers finds a green dragon egg in a nearby forest and return with it to the city. After

selling the egg, the adventurers are murdered one by one in grisly fashion. The sole survivor, a gnome rogue, hires the heroes to protect him as he tries to retrieve the cursed egg.

2. An elf among the party is visited by Cael Vendaelis, a distant relative. Cael is a warrior of the Silaes Tairn, a Tairnadal sect that has been fighting dragons since the elves left Xen'drik. Cael has discovered the location of a rogue blue dragon that slew one of the adventurer's ancestors -- and Silaes tradition demands that the character avenge this murder.

3. House Phiarlan's Carnival of Shadows has acquired a remarkable attraction -- a bronze wyrmling. The elders of Argonnessen will not allow the mother to take direct action against House Phiarlan, and she asks the party to rescue her child.

4. A patron and friend of the party summons the adventurers to an inn to discuss business. As the characters arrive, this patron is assassinated -- and his corpse expands to reveal his true form: that of a gold dragon. The party never knew his true nature, but now they must find out who killed him -- and if whether they themselves are in danger.

5. During the Age of Demons, the war against the fiends brought dragons to all corners of the globe. While exploring the dungeons under a ruined castle in Thrane, the heroes find a tribe of kobolds living inside a dragon's skeleton, led by a powerful kobold sorcerer.

6. The heroes are assigned to spy on a noblewoman, and their patron tells them that he thinks that she is a silver dragon in disguise. Although she is interested in acquiring some artifacts from Xen'drik and wears a silver dragon-shaped ring, the woman is indeed human -- although her intentions may be far from benign.

7. The heroes are hired by a Mror dwarf merchant to explore some ancient caves discovered after a recent earthquake. In one of the caves, they find a crystal prison containing a trapped demon, guarded by a pair of red dragon zombies.

8. While traveling through a manifest zone in Aerenal, the adventurers are caught in a bubble of slow time -- and suddenly they are in the midst of an all-out draconic assault on the island of the elves.

9. While exploring the Mournland, the adventurers encounter the warped remains of a Chamber observer. Once a red dragon, it is now a skeleton wreathed in an aura of living flame.

10. Long ago, a rogue gold dragon formed an alliance with a clan of Dhakaani hobgoblins. Now this Kech Draguus has emerged from hiding. With a corps of half-dragon goblinoids and a few full-blooded dragons at its disposal, the Kech Draguus are poised to reshape Darguun. Will the party act to counter this threat, or will they let the blood of dragons seize the throne of Darguun?

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Lhazaar Principalities, Part One

By Keith Baker

The Lhazaar Principalities stretch across the eastern coast of Khorvaire. The islands northeast of the Hoarfrost Mountains are dark and cold, while the winters are long and the sun a rare visitor. These isles are the source of many sinister tales; living in the long shadow, one can easily imagine ghost ships prowling the waters and lich-lords hiding in the mountains. To the south, steaming jungles cover the Lhazaar islands; the land is home to deadly dinosaurs, and colossal sea serpents are said to lurk beneath the waves. From the frigid north to the southern tropics, these are hard lands that produce hard people.

The Lhazaar region draws its name from the Sarlonan explorer and pirate who colonized Greentarn, Orgalos, and Cape Far. Despite her fame, Lhazaar was neither the first nor last pioneer to settler along the eastern coast of Khorvaire. Over two dozen large islands are in the Principalities, and a remarkable range of people have found their way to the eastern shore. Gnome explorers from Zilargo claimed the isle of Lorghalen long before Lhazaar made her crossing. Elf refugees from the Aereni civil war found solace in the icy solitude of Farlnen. Dwarves and orcs from the Ironroot Mountains migrated to the eastern shore, laying the foundations of Tantamar and Cliffscrape. And dozens of human expeditions followed in the wake of Lhazaar, with most being Sarlonan explorers and fugitives from nations since destroyed by the Riedran Empire. The islanders have come together over the centuries, forming cosmopolitan communities and common traditions.

Despite the blend of races and cultures that have come together to form the Principalities, Lhazaar's influence can still be felt. It was Lhazaar who organized the first raider fleets, leading expeditions against Zil merchants and the ships of the dying Dhakaani Empire. Lhazaar granted her best captains the rank of praelas -- a Riedran rank translated as "prince" in the Common tongue -- proclaiming herself to be the prince among princes. She established the few laws that are universal throughout the realm, notably the fact that the title of prince is not hereditary. By the edicts, a Lhazaar noble holds his post through the power of his fleet and ability to command. Should he slip on either count, a more capable leader can lay claim to his title and his lands. Over the centuries, a number of principalities have adapted this custom to their own traditions; the gnomes of Lorghalen allow would-be princes to challenge a ruler to games of wit and tests of strategy, while the Farlnen elves expect a prince to possess arcane skill in addition to naval power.

The Lhazaar princes have always been willful and independent, and the history of the region is filled with feuds between princes. Powerful alliances have risen and fallen, but the islands have never been fully united under one prince. There has always been at least one lord who has claimed the title of high prince. This claim usually reflects the power of the lord's fleet, and as a result the high prince usually has the respect of the other princes -- but this doesn't make his word law. He can make requests of the other princes, but unless he intends to use force, he cannot make demands.

In the present day, the high prince is Rygar ir'Wynarn, the lord of Greentarn. A clever diplomat and brilliant captain, Rygar has earned the loyalty of a host of warriors and the respect of most of the princes; those who oppose him do so quietly. Rygar called together the delegation that represented the Principalities in the Treaty of Thronehold, and he hopes to one day rule as the true king of the seas.

The Law of the Isles

Few laws bind all citizens of the Principalities. Despite the long history of the isles, the Lhazaar Principalities have never subscribed to a comprehensive system of laws on par with the Code of Galifar. According to Lhazaar's edicts, temporal power rests in the hands of the prince: Each lord has the right to administer justice in his domain, appointing officers as he sees fit. As a result, customs vary significantly from principality to principality. High Prince Rygar goes to great pains to maintain order in Regalport, creating a safe environment for foreign emissaries and traders. But Port Krez in Krag is a wild and dangerous place for outsiders, where street justice is the common answer to social transgressions.

The Lhazaarites are an independent folk: They serve the prince at sea, but they don't want to be ordered about on land. Most Lhazaarites have little interest in the laws of other nations. A Lhazaar proverb states "no man owns the sea," and it's this indifference that fuels the tradition of piracy; a Lhazaar captain believes that he deserves whatever he can take, and whether he acts under the legitimacy of a letter of marque is a matter of convenience. The growing naval power of Galifar forced the Lhazaarites to limit their larcenous actions, but this was a matter of pragmatism as opposed to principle: With the Five Nations weakened by war, many Lhazaar captains have returned to the ways of their forefathers. This attitude often causes trouble for Lhazaarites traveling in other lands, since few feel bound by the laws of foreign kings. Despite these chaotic tendencies, most Lhazaarites are fiercely loyal to family, friends, and other members of their own principality. If one sailor kills another in a brawl, the matter might be completely ignored. But if a foreigner kills a Lhazaarite, the entire community may rise up in outrage. Ties between the Principalities are tenuous, with alliances and feuds changing with the winds. But the princes still unite to defend a prince against an outsider. It is this loyalty that serves as a shield for raiders like Prince Mika's Cloudreavers; if one of the Five Nations actually sent a fleet into the Principalities, they would soon face an alliance of princes.

While the reins of power can shift as swiftly as the tides, much of the social hierarchy of Lhazaar society operates independently of the prince. While the prince has the power to appoint or dismiss ministers and sheriffs, it is rare for a prince to clear house in this manner; these landbound officials are in many ways a separate class, and this continuity is what allows life to continue smoothly through the frequent transitions.

Customs of the Lhazaar Principalities

The water is a way of life for the people of the Principalities. Lhazaar children learn to fish and harvest the bounty of the sea as soon as they are old enough to handle a net, and most are equally at home on the deck of a ship or swimming through the waves. Most Lhazaarites prefer to stay close to the water: the ocean is freedom, and a Lhazaarite deep inland feels isolated and trapped. Lhazaarites prefer fish and salty foods to red meat, and Lhazaar captains traditionally drink salasta, a strong, clear alcoholic beverage made using salas seaweed.

The ancestors of the Lhazaarites came from many different races and nations. There is a wide range of skin and hair color among the humans; the original settlers came from across Sarlona, from desert, jungle, and plains. As a result, Lhazaarites tend to be comfortable with all races, and their culture and language incorporates traces of many others; while a dwarf born in the Lhazaar Principalities may not be able to speak Elven, he may use Elven swear words or interjections in his speech. Many of the humans of tge western Principalities learn Riedran, which is fundamentally the language of Old Sarlona -- though a Lhazaar accent is quite different from that of an Inspired lord. The people of Orgalos have kept Riedran as their primary language and consider Common to be the language of Galifar; over the course of the last century the princes of Orgalos have formed strong ties with the Inspired, and much of the local Riedran trade passes through Piritar.

Lhazaar dress varies from principality to principality, but it often shows traces of the polyglot heritage of the region. Clothing tends to be tough and functional since it's made to resist the rough weather of the seas and the

bitter cold of the northern winter. Lhazaarites take great pride in their hair, and complex braids and decorative accessories are common among both men and women.

Feats

You can include the following feats in your game; a player should work with her DM to ensure that these feats are appropriate for the DM's personal campaign.

Expert Swimmer

You swim like a fish. You can stay underwater far longer than others of your race, and you are at home in the water.

Prerequisite: Swim 4 ranks, Endurance.

Benefit: You can hold your breath for 3 rounds per point of Constitution. You gain a +4 bonus on Constitution checks made to continue holding your breath. On a successful Swim check, you swim your land speed (as a full-round action) or half your land speed (as a move action).

Your natural swim speed is increased by 10 feet, if you have a swim speed.

Normal: You can hold your breath for a number of rounds equal to twice your Constitution before you are at risk of drowning. On a successful Swim check, you swim half your land speed as a full-round action, or one-quarter your land speed as a move action.

Old Salt

You are an old hand at shipboard life, having mastered the myriad skills that are required of the experienced sailor. Additionally, you have an eye for the weather.

Prerequisites: Profession (sailor) 5 ranks.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Balance, Profession (sailor), and Use Rope checks.

Additionally, you may use a Profession (sailor) check to predict the weather (as described under the Survival skill on page 83 in the *Player's Handbook*).

Normal: Survival is normally used to predict the weather.

Ship's Mage

You form a potent supernatural bond with a ship. Your spells have a more potent effect when cast aboard this ship. Spellcasters who possess this feat are greatly favored as ship crew.

Prerequisites: Profession (sailor) 2 ranks, Spellcraft 4 ranks.

Benefit: Add +1 to the caster level of all spells cast while you are aboard a ship that is familiar to you. In addition, spells you cast while aboard a ship that is familiar to you deal no damage to that ship.

It takes one week of living and working aboard a ship to become familiar with it. You may be familiar with only one ship at a time; the familiarity with a particular ship fades should you become familiar with another ship.

Additionally, should you remain away from the ship you are familiar with for more than a month, that familiarity fades as well.

Next: Take a look at a few of the powerful and infamous principalities!

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Lhazaar Principalities, Part Two

By Keith Baker

Over two dozen princes exist in the Lhazaar Principalities. Some of the smaller islands -- such as Krag and Lastpoint -- are under the dominion of a single prince. The coastline and the larger islands are home to multiple princes, each claiming a port stronghold and the surrounding hamlets and thorps.

This article examines a few of the more powerful or unusual principalities. The Knowledge listing provides the skill check required for a player character to know of the principality. It is important to understand that leadership among the principalities is not based simply on level: While a player character could potentially rise to the rank of prince, she would need to win the support of the people of the principality and build a fleet of her own, not simply defeat the current prince in battle. There is more to leadership than level!

The Seadragons

Leader: High Prince Rygar ir'Wynarn (LN male human ranger 9)

Seat: Regalport, Greentarn

Knowledge: Geography (DC 20); local (DC 10); nobility and royalty (DC 15)

With a fleet of twenty ships and a host of loyal warriors, the Seadragons are the strongest force in the Lhazaar Principalities. Under the leadership of High Prince Rygar, they have been a stabilizing force in the region. While Rygar has sailed as both privateer and pirate, in recent years he has made the city of Regalport a center for trade in the eastern sea. The high prince fought for recognition at Thronehold, and the Seadragons have been staunch allies of Q'barra -- helping this fledging nation while gaining access to Q'barran dragonshards.

Rygar is remarkably clever and charismatic, with skills in diplomacy as well as the blade. He has earned a reputation as a man of his word, though he will not give his word carelessly. However, he is a Lhazaarite, and he respects the traditions of his people -- including piracy. Merchants who sail the Bitter Sea can pay for the protection of the Seadragons, and Rygar will strike at any ship that dares to raid near Regalport. But he feels no obligation to hunt down Lhazaarites who engage in piracy.

One of Rygar's earliest acts as prince was to grant House Thuranni land on Greentarn. This alliance between House Thuranni and the Seadragons is one more weapon in the high prince's arsenal. Some say that Rygar wanted to bring House Thuranni to the Principalities to guard against of the Gray Tide principality; if anyone can counter changeling schemes, it's the house of shadow.

Characters of all races and classes can be found among the Seadragons, making this a good background choice for PCs from the Lhazaar Principalities. Seadragons lean toward lawful or neutral alignments.

The Cloudreavers

Leader: Prince Mika Rockface (CE female dwarf barbarian 6)

Seat: Port Krez, Krag

Knowledge: Geography (DC 25); local (DC 10)

The Cloudreaver principality is based on the island of Krag. It is a blend of dwarves, orcs, and half-orcs -- traditionally enemies in the Mror Holds, these races have found common cause on the seas. The Cloudreavers have always been wild and unpredictable, prone to violent feuds and acts of savagery. They never gave up the practice of piracy, even during the height of Galifar's power; this has cost them dearly over the generations, and their power has waxed and waned with the luck of the sea. Currently the Cloudreavers have a fleet of six vessels, but these ships are remarkably swift; the Cloudreavers possess a number of *windsails*, which are magic items imbued with a permanent *gust of wind*. These treasures allow the Cloudreavers to range far from their homeland and to match the speed of elemental galleons. Typically, the Cloudreavers prey on the southeastern shores of Galifar, striking at Q'barran, Aereni, Darguun, and Zil vessels and villages; occasionally Cloudreaver captains even head into Brelish shipping lanes, attacking ships en route to Stormreach or Trolanport. The Cloudreavers prefer to strike at night, taking full advantage of the darkvision possessed by most of their sailors.

Prince Mika Rockface is an aggressive and boisterous woman with remarkable strength and an uncanny ability to inspire terror in her enemies. She believes that she has been blessed by the Devourer and that she gains strength for every vessel she sends to the bottom of the ocean. Whether this is true or simply a delusion remains to be seen!

The Cloudreavers are mostly chaotic dwarves, orcs, and half-orcs, with a few humans. Most Cloudreavers are warriors or barbarians, with a few fighters and rangers. Many Cloudreavers worship the Devourer, and some develop druidic abilities as a result of this devotion. The principality takes its name from this practice; tales speak of Cloudreaver pirates calling lightning from the sky to shatter enemy sails and ships.

The Gray Tide

Leader: Prince Kel (Unknown)

Seat: Lastpoint

Knowledge: Geography (DC 25); local (DC 15)

Changelings have always been viewed with suspicion by most of the people of Khorvaire -- and occasionally that fear has boiled over into something worse. Thirteen hundred years ago, the lords of the nations now known as Karrnath, Cyre, and Thrane began a campaign of extermination against the changeling race. Many changelings fled to Breland or Aundair, hiding among humanity. But one among them was not satisfied with survival. This changeling was named Kel, and he had a vision of a changeling homeland: a realm on the edge of the world, where changelings could live away from the fearful scrutiny of humanity. He traveled the land, speaking to family after family, and slowly an exodus began -- a journey that ended on the island of Lastpoint. There, staring into the disturbing wall of the Gray Tide, Kel declared that they had found their home.

No outsider knows the full size of the Gray Tide principality. Some estimates say that there are over fifty thousand changelings in the Lhazaar Principalities, though it is impossible to know for certain. Changelings have

spread out across the islands, and many of the brothels and theaters in the Principalities are run by changelings. Lastpoint changelings also serve as guides, interpreters, and mediators, serving as hirelings on ships of other princes. Some Lhazaarites fear that the changelings have spread far deeper into Lhazaar society than anyone knows. But most are willing to see the changelings as brothers on the sea, and they are more accepted in this region than anywhere else in Khorvaire.

The Gray Tide principality is ruled by Prince Kel, and it has been since its founding. Most outsiders believe that this is the work of one or more changelings -- a lineage that preserves Kel's image. Some say that Last Point is the seat of the secret society known as the Cabinet of Faces; if so, this is one more secret hidden on this island.

The Gray Tide principality is thought to have four ships, and common belief holds that it does participate in piracy. However, a host of rumors has circulated about the principality. Some say that the changelings can enter the Gray Tide without danger, and that they have a fleet hidden within it. Other tales claim that the changelings have developed ships that can shift appearance, so that their acts of piracy are blamed on others. The truth of these tales is in the hands of the DM.

This principality is inhabited almost entirely by changelings, most of whom are chaotic or neutral. Characters of any class can be found on Gray Tide ships, though experts, rogues, and bards are most common.

The Bloodsails

Leader: Prince Shaen Tasil (LE female elf cleric 7 [Blood of Vol])

Seat: Port Cairn, Farlnen

Knowledge: Geography (DC 25); local (DC 15); religion (DC 30)

When the Undying Court sought to destroy the Mark of Death, all elves carrying the blood of the line were slain. But the Line of Vol had many allies beyond its blood relatives. The Undying Court allowed these elves to surrender, but there was no place for them on Aerenal, and they left to find a new home on Khorvaire. Many of these refugees found their way to the island of Farlnen, making a new home in the long shadow of the Fingerbone Mountains. Today, many elves choose to remain in isolated communities deep in the Fingerbones, but others have embraced Lhazaar culture and the life of the sea. The largest of these is the Bloodsail principality, centered in Port Cairn (a town on the central southern coast of Farlnen).

The elves brought extensive knowledge of magic, archery, and woodworking to the Principalities; Bloodsail ships are some of the finest in the Lhazaar fleets. While the elves are interested in all fields of arcane knowledge, necromancy is especially important to them; every Bloodsail captain has at least one level in wizard (necromancer) or cleric (Blood of Vol). Farlnen is a center for the worship of the Blood of Vol, and almost all of the Bloodsails follow this faith. During the war, the Bloodsails served as privateers for Karrnath. This changed when King Kaius III denounced the Order of the Emerald Claw, and today the Bloodsails often raid Karrnathi ships and villages. Recently, the Bloodsails have formed an alliance with the Diresharks of Point Verge.

The Bloodsails are one of the most stable principalities, and Prince Shaen Tasil has ruled for over a century. Shaen is cool and calculating; she has no interest in holding the position of high prince, but she keeps a close eye on political struggles and has often served as a mediator. The previous leader was Prince Moren; according to legend, Moren was cursed for his dark practices and now sails the Bitter Sea in a ship of bones.

The Bloodsails currently possess seven ships. Tales say that they dye their dark sails with the blood of their victims -- but this could be a story spread to inspire terror.

The Bloodsails are largely lawful or evil elves, with a few humans, half-elves, and changelings spread throughout the populace. While most Bloodsail sailors are warriors, rogues, or swashbucklers, a significant number of clerics and wizards live in the principality.

The Wind Whisperers

Leader: Prince Koulton Brightwind (CN male half-elf ranger 4/dragonmarked heir 4)

Seat: Blackrock, Orthoss

Knowledge: Geography (DC 30); local (DC 20), nobility and royalty (DC 30)

Not all of the Aereni refugees sought shelter in the shadow of the Fingerbones. Some fully embraced Lhazaar culture, mingling with humans and creating a significant population of half-elves. The island of Orthoss is a haven for the Khoravar, and half-elves from across Khorvaire have found their way to the town of Blackrock. Notably, the Lhazaar lifestyle has attracted a number of members of House Medani and House Lyrandar over the centuries -- young rebels seeking an escape from the smothering traditions of their houses. Their blood has been spread across the island, and it has been spread quite thin -- but occasionally a child of Orthoss develops a dragonmark.

Those who develop the Mark of Storm generally find their way to the Wind Whisperers. Members of this small principality are as wild and unpredictable as the wind itself. They often help travelers in distress, but are known for raiding or otherwise interfering with Lyrandar vessels.

The current prince of the Wind Whisperers is Koulton Brightwind. Born Koulton d'Lyrandar, this gifted heir earned his place with the whisperers by stealing an airship and bringing it to Orthoss. House Lyrandar has put a price on his head, but Prince Brightwind has made arrangements with House Thuranni, and so far his head remains attached to his shoulders.

The Wind Whisperers have seven ships, including one airship and two elemental galleons. The remaining four ships are small and fast, and not as powerful as Bloodsail or Seadragon warships.

The Wind Whisperers are primarily chaotic or neutral half-elves, but members of any race or class live in this principality. A half-elf from this principality may develop the Mark of Storm without having a tie to House Lyrandar.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

Dragonshards

The Elves of Aerenal, Part One

By Keith Baker

On the island of Aerenal, the boundaries between life and death have worn thin. The Aereni elves preserve their greatest heroes through magic and faith, and these deathless have provided protection and guidance for thousands of years.

Elven civilization began on the continent of Xen'drik. For thousands of years, the elves were enslaved and oppressed by the powerful nations of the giants. Thirty-nine thousand years ago the elves rose up against the giants . . . but this was a war both sides would ultimately lose. At the height of the conflict, a visionary named Aeren foresaw a coming cataclysm; she gathered a host of elves and convinced them to flee the approaching storm. As dragonfire and terrible magic shattered Xen'drik, the elven fleet landed on the island that would become their home. Aeren guided the elves to this land, but she never saw it with her own eyes; a wasting disease took her life during the long voyage. After interring their prophet in the soil of their new home, the leaders named their land Aerenal, "Aeren's Rest."

Though they had joined together beneath Aeren's banner, the refugees came from many different tribes with a range of traditions and beliefs. They shared a common reverence for their ancestors and the heroes who had died in the cause of freedom. While the elves were a martial culture, Aeren had said that arcane knowledge was the greatest weapon of all, and the majority of the elves chose to set aside the sword for the book. Calling themselves the Aereni, these elves dedicated themselves to the study of magic and mysticism. One of their greatest interests was the art of necromancy; in their reverence for their ancestors, the elves were determined to find a way to preserve their heroes. In time, two schools of thought came to dominate the field of necromancy: the techniques of the line of Vol, which many blame for the spread of vampirism into Khorvaire; and the traditions of the Priests of Transition, which focused on positive energy and the power of Irian. Ultimately it was the positive path that took root in the land, and the lines united behind the cult of the deathless. The Undying Court has ruled the land for over twenty thousand years, and today the deathless are inextricably linked to Aereni society.

Aerenal Today

In the cities of Aerenal, life and death stand side by side. The streets are lined with cenotaphs and memorials far older than human civilization, monuments to the ancient history of the elves and the heroes of previous eras. While this fascination with the fallen may seem morbid to outsiders, it pales by comparison to the presence of the undying. While the members of the Undying Court remain in the city of Shae Mordai, younger deathless can be found across Aerenal. Few foreigners can tell the difference between the deathless and the undead, and as a result travelers often describe Aerenal as a land where the living consort with zombies and liches.

Beyond its fascination with the death and the deathless, Aerenal is a land that looks to the past to shape the present. The Aereni elves place tradition above all else: Artists and bards are expected to perfect ancient techniques instead of developing new styles. The elves apply themselves to their work with uncanny devotion; an elven bowyer may spend centuries honing his skills, and produce bows the like of which a human craftsman could only dream. But he still follows the traditions of the past, and the bow he makes today is a mirror of one that could be found in a 5,000-year-old tomb. Magic is the only field where innovation is encouraged, since the Aereni believe that there is no such thing as perfection when it comes to the arcane arts. But even here, the

elves often find themselves blinded by their traditions; as a result, the magical talents of the younger races are becoming a match for the Aereni.

While people from all nations come to do business at the port of Pylas Talaer, foreigners are rarely welcome elsewhere in Aerenal. Unlike Riedra, no restrictions exist on travel across Aerenal, and adventurers can move freely through the land. But the elves have little patience for members of the younger races. Elf wizards and sages dedicate themselves to their studies, while Aereni artisans devote themselves to their crafts. Even farmers and other laborers pursue their duties with astonishing devotion, seeking perfection in all that they do. Outsiders are a distraction. They are often loud, rude, or simply ignorant, and they disrupt the order of Aerenal. So adventurers are allowed to travel unhindered through the land -- but they are rarely made welcome or catered to in any way. Furthermore, the laws of the land are swift and harsh. Crime is a rare occurrence among the Aereni, and they have no patience for those who disturb this peace. An Aereni magistrate may use *zone of truth* or other forms of divination to confirm the facts of a crime. But the word of the magistrate is final, and a criminal has no rights. While exile is more common than execution, the wise rogue will ply his trade in a more lenient land.

Elven Lines

The nation of Aerenal is an alliance of lines, which serve the Sibling Kings and the Undying Court: Melideth, Jhaelian, Mendyrian, Vaerol, and Tolaen, to name but a few. Each line is descended from one of the tribes that followed the prophet Aeren from Xen'drik. As a result, a line is not a single family: It is a city-state containing a dozen or more separate families, bound together by common history. Thus you can be part of the line of Jhaelian while having the family name Dolorenthi.

Each line is led by a noble house, and by tradition only the members of these houses can be raised as deathless. But membership in a noble house is *not* hereditary. Aereni nobles are chosen, not born: The current members of the house select their successors from among the most remarkable members of their line. Aereni nobles do not even breed among their house; instead, they breed with other members of the line, keeping the noble blood spread throughout the community. For the Aereni, reproduction and marriage are two entirely separate things: marriage is about love, while children are a concern of the entire community. The Aereni believe that their island is a sacred land, and that it can support only so many souls; given their practice of preserving the dead, population control is a serious issue. An elf must earn the right to sire or bear a child, and the nobility has the right to determine the match that has the most promise. As a result, the elves of a particular line see all members of the line as part of an extended family.

Every member of an elven community has the potential to rise to the nobility and from there to the Undying Court. Normally, nobles are chosen based on the skills that they display, and this is why the elves spend centuries honing their talents. But in recent years, younger elves have sought to prove their worth through exploits in foreign lands, battling the Order of the Emerald Claw or seeking the magical secrets of Xen'drik. As an adventurer, this is likely to be the path you have chosen: Your heroic deeds may be your ticket to immortality!

To date, no half-elf has ever been raised to a noble house. But a few Khoravars have rejoined the lines of their ancestors. Aereni pride and prejudice make the prospect of a half-elf noble an unlikely one. But anything can happen. Perhaps you will be the hero who proves that the wisdom of your elven ancestors is untouched by your human blood!

About the Author

Dragonshards

The Elves of Aerenal, Part Two

By Keith Baker

The Dead and the Deathless

The Aereni elves care for all of their dead. The elves have perfected the art of embalming, and some practice this trade in the great cities of Khorvaire. As an elf's body is prepared for burial, two chronicles of her life are made. One copy is buried with her body and one kept in the great library of Shae Mordai; thus she will never be forgotten, and anyone who finds her body in a future age will know of her deeds. The bodies of the fallen are preserved in catacombs that stretch deep beneath the cities of Aerenal, filled with the assembled dead of thirty thousand years. Grave robbing is considered a heinous crime in Aerenal, and someone who knowingly transgresses against the fallen may be killed and cremated, with no record made of his death.

The elves reserve the gift of immortality for their greatest heroes. The Aereni respect knowledge and wisdom as well as martial skill, and the Undying Court includes sages and artists and well as warriors and wizards. But most elves are consigned to the catacombs after death. Traditionally an elf can become deathless only after she has lived three centuries. The Priests of Transition view life as a journey, with undeath as a destination; even those worthy of the honor must experience a full life to appreciate what comes next. However, an elf who shows great promise may be raised from the dead, so that she can continue on the path of life.

A deathless elf does not automatically become a member of the Undying Court. Military heroes usually become undying soldiers; they continue to defend of the nation and exist in the catacombs and all of the major cities of Aerenal. Newly raised undying councilors serve as sages and administrators -- although the living perform the most vital tasks, so that they may complete the journey of life and avoid becoming dependant on the Undying. After a thousand years, a councilor is considered for admittance into the court, where she will tend the ascendant councilors and study with the elders. What happens next is a mystery the mortal mind cannot understand; the ascendant councilors are truly alien beings who are thousands of years old and charged with the energy of Irian.

The Magic of Aerenal

The elves of Aerenal were using *continual flame* while humans were struggling with fire. Each generation has added new enchantments and artifacts to the great cities of the island, and Pylas Talaer has magical wonders that outshine even Sharn. Many cities contain buried orbs enchanted with a powerful form of *prestidigitation;* people passing through an Aereni city may hear ghostly music, and they will find that their clothing, hair, and skin remains perfectly clean. Rumors claim that the nobles maintain a network of teleportation gates that connect the great cities, but if these tales are true, the gates are reserved for the important business of the nobility.

The elves of Aerenal consider arcane magic to be both a science and an art. Most elves have a natural gift for wizardry and find it far easier to follow this path than humans do. While most of the inhabitants of Aerenal are commoners or experts, many possess a level or two of wizard, and professional wizards are as common on Aerenal as magewrights are in Khorvaire. While there is a general interest in necromancy, most of these wizards focus on practical magic -- *Tenser's floating disk, unseen servant, prestidigitation, magecraft,* and similar spells.

While many consider necromancy to be the magic of death, for the Aereni it is far more. In studying death, the Aereni wizard learns about life. In studying fear, he learns about hope. To the elves of Aerenal, the study of necromancy is as much a philosophical voyage as a quest for power; the wizard's ability to strike down his enemy with a *ray of enfeeblement* is a side benefit of his work, not the point of it. The one path that the Aereni avoid is the creation of negatively charged undead: vampires, liches, wraiths, and the like. The Aereni believe that these creatures are anathema to life. According to Aereni lore, the deathless are sustained by the energy of Irian and the devotion of their descendents -- energy that is freely given. Negative undead take the energy they need to survive -- siphoning away the life energy of Eberron itself. Karrnathi necromancers scoff at this belief, but the Aereni take it very seriously.

Aerenal contains a number of manifest zones that are closely linked to Mabar and Irian. These empower necromantic spells, and Aereni wizards and clerics have developed a number of necromantic rituals that can be performed only in these areas. While deathless can leave the island, the Aereni believe that the Undying Court relies on the energy of Irian to maintain its bond to this plane of existence; as a result, the ascendant councilors of the court rarely venture from Shae Mordai, which is the site of the largest of the Irian zones.

Style and Customs

The Aereni seek perfection in everything that they do. Elven clothing is beautiful, typically involving interwoven patterns in two or three different colors. But beyond appearance, Aereni clothing is designed for function: An elven shirt may last its wearer for twenty or thirty years, holding its colors to the end. The elves put equal care into architecture, and some buildings in Shae Mordai are over twenty thousand years old. The elves build their cities from densewood and livewood, creating wooden structures that are just as tough and enduring as buildings of stone.

While the elves take great pleasure in crafting things of beauty, they have unusual ideas about physical beauty. To a follower of the Undying Court, the body is a temporary vessel. Aging and even death are not things to fear -- they are part of the journey of life. The deathless do slowly decompose, and to an elf who plans to spend eternity as one of the undying, physical beauty is a trivial thing. To a large degree, this simply means that the Aereni do not concern themselves with cosmetics to the degree that many other humanoids do. Masks are a common fashion accessory among the elves, and the holy symbol of the Undying Court is a golden mask. Some elves take things a step farther and actually disfigure themselves in life -- abandoning physical beauty to be better prepared for what is to come.

While the Aereni place more importance on mystical knowledge than military might, they still respect the martial traditions of their ancestors. Every elf learns to use sword and bow as a child, and archery and stylized duels are a common form of recreation. For the average elf, this is as much a mental exercise as it is physical. Much like their Tairnadal cousins, the Aereni see war as an art. Aereni soldiers usually rely on speed and skill as opposed to brute force. Swashbucklers and scouts are common among the Aereni, but the island has its fair share of fighters -- deadly warriors focused in the paths of archery or Combat Expertise.

To an outsider, Aereni often seem cold and repressed. This is not actually the case; the elves feel emotions as strongly as any other race. They simply don't display their feelings as blatantly as members of the younger races, and they rarely reveal their thoughts to strangers. Aereni do possess a sense of humor, but it is quite sophisticated; an Aereni joke may take an hour or day to come to fruition. Humans generally find Aereni humor to be dull or confusing, while the elves consider the culture of the Five Nations to be simplistic and crass -- though it can be excused on account of youth.

Questions to Ask

As an elf from Aerenal, a critical question you need to answer is why you have left your homeland. The Aereni rarely travel; their island is a sacred place, while Khorvaire is a land of chaos and ignorance. You may be searching for a way to achieve your full potential, in the hopes of being raised to the nobility and eventually to the Undying Court. You could be one of the undead hunters of the Deathguard, or a spy in the service of the Cairdal Blades. You may be acting on behalf of your line -- or perhaps you have a patron in the Undying Court itself, who has asked you to be his eyes in the world beyond Shae Mordai. Or perhaps you believe that the culture of Aerenal is stagnant, and you have turned your back on your land, searching for wisdom in the world of the younger races.

Here are some other things you may want to consider:

- What is the history of your line? The line of Jhaelian is deeply spiritual, producing many of the most powerful adepts and clerics of Aerenal. Does your line have a particular tradition of magic or martial skill?
- Who are your parents? One of your biological parents will be a member of the noble house of your line. Do you have a close connection with her, or have you never had a bond?
- The Right of Counsel feat represents a close tie to a particular member of the Undying Court. All Aereni have ancestors in the Undying Court: to earn the Right of Counsel, you have to have performed great deeds or otherwise show remarkable potential. If you have this feat, you and your DM need to decide who your patron is, and how you came to his attention.
- The Aereni elves are raised to be patient. You may live for thousands of years; as an adult elf, you've already lived longer than the average human will. Take your time when making decisions. Don't jump to conclusions or let your emotions force you into rash action. Cultivate calm.
- As an elf of Aerenal, you have been taught that physical appearance is ultimately irrelevant. Don't judge people by their appearance; while others may be seduced by beauty or horrified by disfigurements, to you these are simply transitory aspects of life.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Warforged, Part One

By Keith Baker

In this age of tenuous peace, the warforged are a constant reminder of the Last War. These living constructs are described in detail in *Races of Eberron*. The next two Dragonshards expand on the material in *Races of Eberron*, looking at specific aspects of warforged history, physiology, and psychology.

Aaren d'Cannith: Father of the Warforged

The name that most people associate with the warforged is that of Merrix d'Cannith. This man developed the first of the creation forges, and his warforged titans were the first of the sentient constructs. As brilliant as Merrix II was, it was his son Aaren who created the first truly living constructs. Born into an age of war, Aaren was a philosopher as well as an artificer. While his father worked on weapons, Aaren studied the nature of life itself, seeking ways to breathe true consciousness into metal and stone. Many ridiculed his ideas until his work bore strange fruit. Using a modified creation forge, Aaren blended a diverse range of materials and techniques to create an entirely new form of construct. Aaren's creations were capable of independent, creative thought, and even emotional behavior. These were the first true warforged.

The warforged possessed many advantages over traditional constructs. Aaren had incorporated organic material into their design, binding steel and stone together with a flexible material similar to the roots of livewood trees. These binding roots could be rapidly grown within a creation forge, reducing the cost of production; they also responded to traditional healing magic, though these spells were not as effective on the warforged as they were on creatures of flesh and blood.

Aaren was a dreamer, who sought to unravel the mysteries of life. But his father had other plans for his son's inventions. Here was the tireless soldier the house had been seeking. Merrix adapted the creation forges to use Aaren's designs, and soon the house was producing platoons of armored constructs, which were indoctrinated into service as soon as they emerged from the forges. During this time, the term "warforged" was coined, since Merrix sought to hammer a martial purpose into these constructs from the moment of birth. Aaren protested what he saw as the abuse and enslavement of his creations, but his pleas were ignored. In 970 YK, Aaren was excoriated -- formally disinherited from House Cannith. Merrix d'Cannith adopted his grandson, who was also named Merrix; in time, this boy would become House Cannith's Baron of Sharn.

Following his expulsion, Aaren disappeared. His fate remains a mystery, and diviners and inquisitives have found no traces of him. Most believe that Aaren is long dead, but a number of conflicting stories present other possibilities. Some say that Aaren still wanders the world, and that he is dong what he can to help warforged adjust to a life of peace. Others say that he went mad, and that he has entered the service of the sinister Lord of Blades. According to these tales, the Lord of Blades has salvaged a creation forge in the Mournland, and Aaren is using it to produce strange new warforged. And then some others claim that Aaren IS the Lord of Blades -- that he has crafted a suit of armor that makes him appear to be a warforged, or that he has found a way to transfer his consciousness into a warforged body. The truth is for the DM to decide, but should Aaren still live, an encounter with the legendary artificer could have important consequences for any warforged characters.

Warforged Composition

Warforged are formed in the creation forges, which channel the powers of Cannith heirs to produce effects similar to *major creation* and *fabricate*. The materials of the warforged are not truly natural; this is reflected by the ability of a warforged juggernaut to change its shape over time (growing spikes), or the fact that an armorer can repair a mithral warforged even when he doesn't have any mithral on hand. An important side effect of this is that if material is removed from the body of a warforged, it quickly degrades. As a result, stripping a warforged and selling its metal is impossible; a warforged may have adamantine components, but these will rust and pit when they are pulled from the warforged.

The warforged are made using a blend of materials. The core of a warforged is a frame formed from wood, stone, or metal. Bundles of rootlike fibers surround the core and serve as the muscles of the construct. Plates of steel and wood are fused over this layer of tendrils, forming the hard outer shell of the warforged. The precise appearance and construction of the body depends on the model of the warforged, as represented by its initial feats. This also affects the weight of the warforged, as shown below.

Composite Plating: A warforged with the default composite plating has a base height of 5'10", with a +2d6 height modifier, base weight of 270 pounds, and weight modifier of x4.

Adamantine Body: Its base weight is 320 pounds, with a weight modifier of x6. While adamantine itself is no heavier than steel, a warforged with this feat is typically more massive than other models, with more steel and stone in its construction.

Darkwood Body or Mithral Body: Its base weight is 180 pounds, with a weight modifier of x2. These materials are unusually light, and these warforged tend to be lean and flexible.

Unarmored Body: Its base weight is 225 pounds, with a weight modifier of x3. A warforged with this feat is covered with composite plating, but these plates are extremely thin and do not interfere with movement or spellcasting.

Insignia

After emerging from the forge, most of the warforged were marked with symbols indicating the military specialty and national allegiance, so soldiers could identify their allies on the battlefield. In the years following the war, most warforged have had these insignia removed. However, some have left these symbols intact out of indifference or nostalgia. A character can identify warforged military insignia with a successful Profession (soldier) or Knowledge (history) skill check (DC 10). These symbols can be altered or concealed with the Disguise skill, or removed by any armorsmith.

The Ghulra

Composition and insignia are elements that many warforged may share. But every warforged has one unique feature: the sigil engraved on its forehead. These symbols are as individual as human fingerprints, and if a warforged possesses the ability to cast *arcane mark,* its personal mark will be the same as the sigil on its forehead. These symbols were not designed by human hands. When Aaren d'Cannith's first construct emerged from the creation forge, it bore a symbol on its forehead, and the second had a different sigil. Aaren's dedicated dwarven magewrights called these symbols "ghulra," a Dwarven word for "truth."

Warforged adopt names to deal with humans, but when dealing with each other, the ghulra serves as an important form of identification. A warforged may wear a hood to conceal its forehead from strangers, but when among friends most prefer to leave the symbol visible. While someone could gouge away the symbol, the ghulra is a part of the warforged in a way nobody truly understands; when someone uses *repair* or *cure* spells on the warforged, a damaged ghulra is restored to its original shape. While it cannot be permanently destroyed, a warforged can cover its ghulra or may choose to use Disguise to place a false mark over its real one.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Warforged, Part Two

By Keith Baker

Warforged Childhood

A warforged emerges from the creation forge with only the most basic knowledge of the world, drawn from a template bound into the creation forge. It can speak the Common tongue, and it recognizes the humans of House Cannith as its creators and instructors. It is not born with skill at arms, or the power of magic. Yet somehow, over the course of a few short months, the trainers of House Cannith transform this newborn into an elite soldier capable of facing the undead strength of a Karrnathi zombie or the skill of a Thrane knight.

House Cannith is the House of Making, not a military powerhouse. How did it mold the warforged to produce fighters, wizards, and other classes so rarely found among the general populace?

The warforged is born a blank slate, but it possesses a voracious appetite for knowledge. Just as the mind of a human child is more flexible than that of an adult, in its first few months a warforged possesses an astonishing ability to learn and adapt. A warforged may begin with no knowledge of the battlefield. But many Cannith instructors claim that the knowledge seems to be hidden beneath the surface, just waiting to be unlocked -- that within a few months of training, a warforged soldier may outstrip the skills of his teacher. The warforged must be shown the path to walk, but after taking its first steps, a warforged often picks up speed, learning skills in mere months that a human might take years to master.

After the first few months, however, the warforged's thought patterns crystallize, fixing on the path it has chosen. At this point, it is essentially an adult: It possesses the skills it needs to perform its chosen task, and while it can still learn new skills, this takes just as much time as it would for a human or an elf.

A side effect of this focused study is that warforged tend to frame their lives around their military specialties. A warforged may have the same skills as a human warrior, but that human had a life beyond war. He has memories of his parents, his lovers, his children, of songs and stories, of tears and joy. The warforged soldier knows only war -- and now he must learn of the world that exists beyond the battlefield. More information about this soldier mindset can be found in *Races of Eberron*.

In the last years of the war, some forgeholds sought to take maximum advantage of this early "savant stage." Since constructs have no need of sleep, the warforged could train for 24 hours each day. Some facilities would use rotating shifts of human instructors; others turned to warforged instructors, using tireless constructs to train constructs. Most of these programs produced exceptionally skilled warforged soldiers. However, some artificers claim that the products of this path were typically more independent and less reliable. Some say that the Lord of

Blades was one of these warforged instructors -- and that his most loyal followers are the students he trained at the Cannith forgehold.

Cults and Religions

Races of Eberron presents many of the most common beliefs of religious warforged. But warforged follow as many different paths as humans do, so take a look at more options to consider when creating player characters or NPCs.

The Silver Flame: The Church of the Silver Flame has much to offer the warforged. The Flame itself is not an anthropomorphic deity, and it is not supposed to have created or shaped human civilization. Instead, it can guide a warrior and empower her in the battle against evil. Warforged that fear death may take comfort in the concept of immortality through the Flame, since noble souls are said to bond with the Flame after death. Most importantly, the church is a militant order, and for the warforged soldier who feels lost without a war, the Church of the Silver Flame offers an anchor and a chance to take part in a battle that will never end -- the struggle against evil itself.

Many in the church still feel that the warforged do not have souls and are not the equals of the true servants of the Flame. However, as more warforged join the church, cardinals, ministers, and templars alike are being impressed with the dedication and good works performed by these tireless servants of the light.

One of the most prominent warforged followers of the Silver Flame is a warforged soldier named Brightspear (LG male personality warforged fighter 1/paladin 8). Built to serve Aundair in the Last War, Brightspear was rendered inert in a battle on the Eldeen border, but he was restored by a group of Silver Flame priests. Brightspear claimed to have heard the voice of the Flame while inert, calling him to serve, and he subsequently proved able to channel the power of the Flame to perform miracles. Over the past decade, he has battled undead, aberrations, and a host of other monsters; he is best known for uncovering a rakshasa assassin and killing the fiend in Aurala's court. Brightspear uses the warforged paladin substitution levels outlined in *Races of Eberron*.

The Traveler: Many know that Onatar is the sovereign lord of the forge. Far fewer know of the role of the shifty Traveler and why this trickster is a deity of artifice. Some say Onatar guides the hands of the smith, but the Traveler is the source of new ideas -- of inspiration that can lead an artificer to entirely new paths of knowledge. The danger is that one never knows where these paths will lead: What seems like a good idea may have disastrous consequences down the road. While Onatar is the official patron of House Cannith, many in the house make secret sacrifices to the Traveler. Today a growing cult among the warforged has members who believe that this mysterious deity is the true creator of the warforged. This belief has even spread among the followers of the Lord of Blades, some of whom say that the Lord of Blades is a vessel for a spark of the Traveler itself. Warforged followers of the Traveler believe that the Cannith artificers were tricked into creating the warforged and were guided by the hand of the Traveler. Their true purpose is yet to be revealed, but humanity may learn to beware the gifts of the Traveler.

The most powerful warforged advocate of the Traveler is not a cleric, but rather an artificer. Wheel (CN female personality warforged artificer 10) is an ally of the Lord of Blades, and she has used her talents to create many of his weapons. She believes that the Lord of Blades is a tool of the Traveler, but her first loyalty is to her god, and she may prove to be an unexpected ally of the party when things are at their worst. She uses the warforged artificer substitution levels from *Races of Eberron.*

The Blood of Vol: While some warforged turn to the Blood of Vol in hopes of escaping death, others join the cult

for exactly the opposite reason. Many of the followers of the Blood believe that life is a battle against the curse of death. For mortals, the only escape is undeath. But warforged are already immune to hunger, disease, age, exhaustion, and many of the other plagues of mortality. As a result, some Blood evangelists have convinced warforged soldiers that they are the perfect champions of the church -- that they will fight at the side of the vampire lords in the final battle against death itself. These warforged soldiers are often haughty and arrogant in their newfound sense of immortality.

One of most dangerous servants of Vol calls himself Thirst (NE male personality warforged scout 5/assassin 3). While not a vampire, Thirst takes pleasure in spilling the blood of the enemies of Vol.

Warforged Senses

The warforged possess the same five senses that human beings do: sight, smell, hearing, touch, and even taste. They do not perceive the world in precisely the same way as humans do, and many of these senses are fairly dull in comparison to those of creatures of flesh and blood. But a warforged can smell smoke in the air and can gauge the extent of an injury by the pain that it feels. Many warforged value the magical component known as the *tracker mask* because it expands their sense of smell, allowing them to experience the world in a new way. But a warforged can still smell strong odors without the mask.

The warforged sense of taste is one of the mysteries of the race. It has little value to a soldier and creature that has no need of food. In fact, this is not something that was designed by the artificers of House Cannith. Warforged are not automatons, and not every aspect of the warforged is the result of human planning: They are creatures of magic that defy natural law. A warforged is a creature of stone and wood, yet it can feel love and hate. Is it any stranger that it should be able to smell and taste?

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

Masters of Magic

By Keith Baker

While magewrights and adepts play important roles in the world of Eberron, true artificers, wizards, and sorcerers are relatively rare -- and high-level characters with these classes are rarer still. So when a wizard reaches 17th level, where should she expect to find 9th-level spells she can copy? Where do powerful scrolls and magic items come from?

A complete list of the mightiest wizards of Eberron could fill a book. The dragons of Argonnessen have forgotten more about magic than the Twelve have discovered. The dragons shared many of their secrets with the giants of Xen'drik, and artifacts exist in the shattered land that House Cannith cannot duplicate. The rakshasas have an innate gift for magic, and the broken library of Ashtakala holds wonders that would amaze the wizards of Aundair. Humanity has produced its own legends over the course of history, even if most of these have fallen to the passage of time. This article presents a few mighty mages -- but this is a foundation for DMs to build upon, nothing more.

Mordain the Fleshweaver

While the Twelve seeks to advance arcane science, its members are expected to abide by codes of ethical conduct. But there have always been wizards who believe that any sacrifice can be justified in the name of arcane progress. One of these is Mordain d'Phiarlan, now known as Mordain the Fleshweaver. As a provost of the Twelve, Mordain sought to advance the arts of transmutation in new and terrible ways. He delved into the forbidden studies of the Closed Circle of Sharn and sought to claim the powers of the daelkyr as his own. The council of the Twelve have sealed all records of his work, but people still whisper of the horrors found in his workshop when his research was finally exposed. Many wonder why he wasn't executed for these crimes; some say that his family connections were too powerful, while others suggest that the lords of the Twelve still hoped to benefit from his work -- even if they couldn't officially condone it.

Whatever the truth, Mordain was excoriated from House Phiarlan and banished from the Twelve in 797 YK. Thirty years later, rumors arose of a dark tower in the far wastes of western Breland, in the region now known as Droaam. Mordain had found a new home, and for the last two centuries he has remained in his sinister keep, shunning all contact with the outside world. The lands around his tower are filled with deadly monsters, and the tales say that these are his creations -- and that the horrors within his fortress are far, far worse.

Some say that Mordain has formed an alliance with the Daughters of Sora Kell, and that they are providing him with knowledge and resources in exchange for living weapons. But it is just as likely that the hags and the wizard have a simple truce: The hags leave Mordain alone, and he keeps his terrors from threatening their rule.

By now, Mordain should be 438 years old -- well into his twilight years. However, a few among the Twelve say that Mordain experimented on himself -- that while he is no lich, he has blended the blood of dragon and troll in his veins, and is no longer an elf in any meaningful sense of the word. Others say that Mordain is a feeble, decrepit creature, but that he never allows outsiders to see him -- he has an army of organic constructs, and projects his thoughts through these vessels. Should a party decide to face Mordain in person, the DM needs to decide whether Mordain is himself a monster -- or whether it is even possible to meet with the Fleshweaver.

Mordain is an 18th-level elf transmuter specializing in the transformation of living creatures. *Polymorph any object*, *shapechange*, *clone,* and *soul bind* are all in his library, along with a host of lower-level transmutations. If a DM wishes to introduce new spells of transformation or new types of flesh golems into the game, Mordain is a likely source. Mordain can even justify the addition of unusual creatures into the world. Do you like abeil, but don't want to explain why they don't have a widespread culture? Perhaps Mordain created the first bee-people a year ago, and they are just starting to spread beyond his tower. . . .

More information about Mordain can be found on page 167 of the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*.

Sora Kell, the Queen of the Night

Along with the rakshasas, the night hags were the first children of Khyber, born in the first age of the world. But the night hags are far fewer in number, and they are secretive creatures who haunt waste and dream. One of the few who has become known in legends is the dreadful Sora Kell, mother to the hags of Droaam. Hundreds of legends of Sora Kell exist, and many directly contradict one another. In one story she seems to be a wizard with epic powers, while in another she destroys an army with only her claws. Sora Kell is best known as a wanderer, traveling across the world and the myriad planes in search of mystical knowledge, which she may take by force or cunning. Some say that she is aligned with the Traveler, and a few believe that she IS the Traveler -- or at least, that many of the tales of the Traveler actually describe the exploits of the hag. Regardless of her personal abilities, Sora Kell could be the source of almost any spell or magic object; her lairs are hidden across the planes, and most contains racks of scrolls and libraries of ancient spells, along with maps of forgotten ruins and lore about the mysteries of the multiverse.

Despite the many tales she has spawned, there has been no confirmed sighting of Sora Kell for over a century. Perhaps she has set a task before her daughters and is content to watch events unfold. Maybe she is trapped in another plane or working on a spell that could shake the foundations of the world. But whether the hag ever returns, her secret troves are hidden across the world, waiting to be found.

Orlassk, the Lord of Stone

Seven Magical Encounters

1. Rakshasas love to gamble. Just after the party has found a magic artifact, a rakshasa appears to the group. He can teach the group's wizard a powerful spell known only to the fiends -- if they are willing to wager the artifact in a game of skill or chance. Of course, victory might have long-term consequences: The Lords of Dust always look to the long term, and the rakshasa may have a sinister reason to place the knowledge in the hands of the heroes!

2. A plague of petrification is slowly spreading across western Breland. Is this the work of the Daughters of Sora Kell, or is it an ancient weapon from the Xoriat incursion? Either way, the only hope of countering this disaster lies in the living citadel of Orlassk, which is wandering the caverns deep below Cazhaak Draal.

3. One of the heroes' relatives is afflicted with a terrible wasting disease caused by the Mourning, and divine magic has proven useless. An oracle says that Mordain the Fleshweaver could undo this damage. Can the heroes obtain an audience with the transmuter and convince him to aid the ailing heir? What terrible price might Mordain ask for his assistance?

4. Exploring an ancient ruin, the party recovers a series of scrolls -- lost songs of Jhazaal Dhakaan. If a bard holds onto these scrolls, he can learn the new spells when he advances to a sufficient level. However, the Dhakaani will be furious to find their songs being desecrated by outsiders, and shaarat'khesh assassins are sent to silence the bard forever.

5. Traveling through the Mournland, the party encounters a village populated by living statues. Each of these stone golems is a perfect replica of one of the former inhabitants who were killed in the Mourning, in both appearance and memory, but they

The daelkyr are creatures of madness. A daelkyr drives mundane creatures mad with its presence, and it twists and corrupts everything that it touches. But not all daelkyr are alike. The greatest of the lords of Xoriat have their own specialties and unique powers.

Orlasskis the master of stone. Stories credit this daelkyr with the creation of the medusas, basilisks, and all other creatures with the power to turn flesh to stone. The medusas of Droaam deny having any ties to the daelkyr, and they are not aberrations. But the records of the Gatekeepers clearly show that medusas fought on the side of the daelkyr in the battle for Cazhaak Draal; whether they were creations of Orlassk or simply its slaves is open to debate. Orlassk's citadel is said to be formed of living stone -- a giant gargoyle that prowls the depths of Khyber.

The daelkyr are creatures of magic. Orlassk is no wizard, and it can produce effects or artifacts no wizard could duplicate. But a character could learn new secrets of transmutation by studying one or Orlassk's workshops or items it has created -- whether these are spells like *statue* or *flesh to stone*, or entirely new and more terrifying rituals of petrification. The same could be true of other daelkyr: A wizard might learn *prying eyes* by studying the works of the dread Belashyrra, but perhaps she could find far worse -- say, a version of the spell whose floating eyes can unleash the deadly rays of a beholder!

cannot perceive their own condition or that of the ruins around them. Why has Orlassk rebuilt this village? Can the inhabitants leave the Mournland, or will they revert to inert stone if they try?

6. Mordain is using his magic to lure wizards' familiars to his tower, where he transforms them into humanoid creatures and sends them back to kill their masters. When a character's familiar disappears, can the party rescue her before it's too late?

7. An old woman asks the party to help free her daughter -- a young sorcerer who has been become trapped in Dal Quor, the region of dreams. The woman is actually Sora Katra -- and her "daughter" is Sora Kell herself. After a century in Dal Quor, Sora Kell has learned much of the plans of the Dreaming Dark -- but can the party trust the hag?

Jhazaal Dhakaan, the Voice of Doom

The goblinoid Empire of Dhakaan was an agnostic civilization with no tradition of wizardry. But magic was still a part of goblin society: bardic magic, the songs of the duur'kala. The greatest dirge singer in history was Jhazaal Dhakaan, who united the six kings and forged the foundation of the empire. It is said that she could win the heart of a listener with but a word, or bring down an army with a scream. Whatever personal powers she possessed, she crafted many powerful artifacts. Jhazaal made the mighty horn *Ghaal'duur* (***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* page 272), and this is but one of her legendary creations.

If a Dungeon Master wishes to introduce new bard spells into a campaign, the ancient traditions of the Dhakaani are certainly a logical way to do it. A bard could attempt to recreate one of the ancient songs of Jhazaal. And the dirge singers of Dhakaan are a source for magic instruments of all kinds, from *horns of blasting* to *drums of panic.*

About the Author

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Dragonshards

The Reach of Riedra, Part One

By Keith Baker

Mysteries surround the nation of Riedra. Most people of Khorvaire have heard only vague and contradictory stories of Riedra: All wizards and sorcerers are put to death. Sorcerers rule the land. Demons rule the land. Gold covers the streets and no one ever goes hungry... or the people starve in huts of mud and straw.

If you've read the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*, you know the true nature of the Inspired and the goals of the Dreaming Dark. But that puts you far ahead of the average citizen of Khorvaire. So, what do people know about Riedra? What roles can Riedrans play in your campaign? And given the supreme subtlety of the Dreaming Dark, how can you actually USE it?

First Contact

When the Inspired rose to power in Riedra, they cut off all contact between Sarlona and Khorvaire. For a thousand years Riedra has been hidden from the outside world. To this day, most civilized regions are shielded from divination. An adventurer who researches the matter will find that a surprising number of wizards and inquisitives who sought to pierce the mysteries of Riedra have gone mad -- typically driven to distraction by terrible nightmares. Ships that sought harbor at Riedra were turned away. Explorers who sought to pierce the veil of secrecy never returned. The Riedrans took no aggressive action, but they wanted no part of the outside world.

Centuries later, ships of House Lyrandar and the Galifar navy encountered Riedran vessels in the Thunder Sea and the Barren Sea. The Riedrans established settlements on Xen'drik long before the people of Khorvaire, and the pirates who built the foundations of Stormreach preyed on Riedran shipping. Through Stormreach, they established the first basis of trade, dealing in spices, alchemical solutions, fine textiles, and other exotic goods. Foreigners could not set foot in Riedra, and the Inspired did not send ambassadors to the court of Galifar. But a few small Riedran communities appeared in the major port cities of Galifar, managing the shipping trade for their homeland.

It took the Last War and the fall of Galifar to bring the Inspired to Khorvaire. When the war had passed its first decade, delegations of Inspired appeared in the courts of the newly independent Five Nations. Beautiful and charming, these strangers offered their aid to the war-torn kingdoms. The medicines supplied (for a fair price, of course) by Riedra helped to ease the strain on House

What Do You Know?

Knowledge (geography)

DC 10: Riedra is the largest nation on the continent of Sarlona. Riedra is a sprawling realm that includes all types of terrain.

DC 15: The Riedrans are xenophobes who avoid contact with the outside world. Riedra has recently sent ambassadors to Khorvaire, but foreigners are still unwelcome in Riedra.

DC 20: Members of the ruling class of Riedra are known as the Inspired. The Riedrans believe that the Inspired are guided by divine powers, and these princes are treated as living gods.

This information is also available with a DC 25 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check, which will also reveal the name of the local Inspired ambassador.

Knowledge (history)

DC 15: Human civilization began in Sarlona. Humanity began to explore Khorvaire

Jorasco. The Inspired often served as neutral mediators, impressing kings and queens with their wisdom and charisma. Foodstuffs from Riedra helped limit the impact of Karrnath's famine. Slowly but surely, the Inspired and their servants spread across Khorvaire.

Riedrans in the Modern World

Today, Inspired ambassadors live in every metropolis and in many of the large cities of Khorvaire. Most ports have small Riedran communities. Cityfolk see Riedrans on the streets and the docks, dressed in the simple clothing of their homeland and speaking in the Riedran tongue. As a rule the Riedrans are quiet and insular, keeping to themselves and abstaining from most vices. Riedran goods are becoming more common on the streets. Virin is a beverage made from Sarlonan roots that eases fatigue. Jorasco houses often make use of Riedran healing herbs. And on the more sordid side of things, the sale of dreamlily -- an addictive narcotic originally brought over for medicinal purposes -- has become a major industry in the underworld of Khorvaire.

In the upper echelons of society, the Riedrans have been gaining influence. The Inspired have access to vast mineral and agricultural resources, along with the prosperity that comes from a thousand years of order. The Riedrans have been providing generous material aid to all of the Five Nations, helping repair the terrible damages of the Last War. This also allows the rulers of the nations to maintain their pride: It's easier for Kaius to get grain from the Inspired than to have to beg Aundair for assistance. King Sebastes of Q'barra is currently receiving military support from Riedra; the Inspired have established garrisons in the region around Newthrone to help defend the settlers from lizardfolk attacks. Other leaders may be considering this; if war looms anew, Aundair could seek Riedran aid to defend itself from the larger armies of Thrane or Karrnath -- a desperate move, perhaps, but Aurala may be swayed by dreams of the power such an alliance might bring!

Kings and queens are not the only people who deal with the Inspired. While the Riedran community tends to stay out of sight, Inspired ambassadors and their staff are active in their communities; exotic and clever, these beautiful strangers fascinate the upper crust of Khorvaire. In the city of Sharn, Ambassador Jorasesh often gives impromptu lectures at Morgrave University; both Jorasesh and his aide Helkashtai attend all of the major galas and social events of the city. The Inspired are seen as impartial outsiders, but also respected for their apparent wisdom and empathy, and they often provide advice or serve as mediators in local disputes.

approximately three thousand years ago, led by the pioneer Lhazaar.

DC 25: Many kingdoms and empires once covered Sarlona. About 1,500 years ago, the Inspired unified these warring states.

Knowledge (psionics)

DC 10: The continent of Sarlona is the center of psionic knowledge. Both the kalashtar and the Inspired have a natural talent for psionics, and many of the psions of Khorvaire have learned the art from a Sarlonan teacher.

DC 20: The Sarlonans use relatively little magic in everyday life, but psionics are used to accomplish many of the same tasks that magic is used for in Khorvaire.

Knowledge (the planes)

DC 15: The quori are the natives of Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams. Quori spirits cannot manifest physically on the Material Plane.

DC 20: Quori spirits typically possess mental powers relating to a specific emotion, such as fear or rage. They can interfere with the dreams of mortals, creating horrible nightmares.

DC 25: While quori spirits cannot manifest physically on Eberron, they can possess willing humans.

DC 25: The Inspired have a strong connection to Dal Quor. Some believe that they deal regularly with quori spirits -- or even allow these spirits to possess their bodies in exchange for power.

Dragonshards

The Reach of Riedra, Part Two

By Keith Baker

Riedra and Adar

Most citizens of Khorvaire know even less about Adar than they do about Riedra. Adar is only loosely a country, and it does not maintain embassies. Adaran communities exist in many of the major cities of Khorvaire, but the typical Brelish commoner can't tell a Riedran from an Adaran -- or potentially, an Adaran from a citizen of Thrane. The people of Khorvaire first came from Sarlona, and with the many different environments found across the continent there is no uniform appearance for Riedrans. Accent, dress, and mannerisms are the keys to identification, and without Knowledge (geography) or experience with the culture, a normal citizen of Khorvaire can't tell the difference between the people of the two nations.

This is exacerbated by the fact that the Adarans are just as insular as the people of Riedra. It may seem strange that they aren't calling for aid against the Dreaming Dark in all the courts of the world, but they believe that the fight with Dal Quor is their personal battle; this is discussed in more detail in *Races of Eberron*.

If an Inspired ambassador is questioned about the ongoing siege of Adar, his answer is simple. The people of Adar are guerilla warriors who are fighting a war against Riedra. The Adarans have dangerous supernatural powers and have used them against Riedrans in the past. The "siege" is a defensive measure to ensure the stability of the nation. All of these things are perfectly true -- if severely slanted for the benefit of the Inspired -- so this will hold up against *zone of truth* or *detect thoughts*. The kalashtar *are* fighting the rulers of Riedra. If the kalashtar are successful in their goal, they will destroy the Inspired and thus the system of government of Riedra. The Inspired are (in their words) seeking to maintain order and preserve the traditions of their nation.

And if a kalashtar PC does breaks ranks and trumpet the existence of the Dreaming Dark to the world . . . who's going to believe him? The Riedrans are strange, but they have never taken any sort of aggressive action against Khorvaire. On the contrary, they're helping rebuild the shattered nation. They're friendly, charming, and generous. Why should a king take the word of some strange peasant mystic over that of a close political ally?

Of course, some people may be wiser than this. Initially, that's the role of the PCs -- to be willing to consider the possible threat, to act where a king might not. And if a PC becomes a legendary hero, perhaps the rulers of the land will take her words more seriously. That's what adventuring is all about!

The Dreaming Dark

The average Riedran has never even heard of the Dreaming Dark and knows nothing of Dal Quor. Riedrans believe that their leaders are vessels for the enlightened spirits of the past -- that there is a cycle of life and reincarnation, and that the greatest and most noble spirits transcend the flesh and guide the Inspired.

For that matter, the Inspired -- that is to say, the leaders of Riedra and those who hold official posts, such as ambassadors -- generally have no direct ties to the Dreaming Dark. Their administrative duties are enough to keep them busy and serve the interests of Dal Quor in their own way. An agent of the Dreaming Dark can

demand help from an Inspired embassy, but more likely than not will do this telepathically or in Dal Quor. So the embassy itself cannot be directly linked to local Dreaming Dark activities, and the ambassador can't reveal anything if probed.

This level of subtlety does make the Dreaming Dark one of the more difficult villains to use. The Dreaming Dark use *mind seeds* and possessed humans. Their agents may be followers of the Emerald Claw or the Cults of the Dragon Below, who don't realize the true nature of their masters. The party could foil a dozen schemes before they find out that all twelve were part of a grand scheme organized by the Dreaming Dark. And even when the PCs have the big showdown with the Inspired mastermind and bring him down in a blaze of psionic power, that doesn't implicate Riedra as a whole, any more than fighting a human would implicate Khorvaire. It tells people that there *are* evil Inspired; but the ambassador can go under a *zone of truth* and say that the villain had no ties to his government and that he knew nothing of his plan. Compartmentalization is key!

While most Riedrans know nothing of the Dreaming Dark, Riedran agents who serve the darkness do exist. Just as the Inspired ambassadors keep their distance from the cabal, these human agents have no connection to the Riedran government or embassy. While these agents do not have the full powers of the Inspired, they can serve as willing hosts for quori possession (see page 296 of the *Eberron Campaign Setting*). Seeing as how they are human, this power can come as a surprise to unwary adventurers!

Riedrans in the World

Anyone traveling through the docks of a large city could stumble across a Riedran community. Characters may end up dealing with Riedran merchants, or run afoul of a Riedran community militia seeking to defend their community from the criminals of Khorvaire. PCs may run into an Inspired ambassador giving a speech or a mediating a dispute. And if the heroes perform a particularly impressive task, they may be invited to a gala in their honor at a Riedran embassy!

Describing all the cultural differences between the people of Khorvaire and those of Riedra is a subject for a sourcebook. But here are a few points with which you can play:

- Riedrans speak their own language and must acquire Common as a bonus language or by spending skill points. Merchants must learn Common to perform their work, but a Karrn who walks into a Riedran watering hole may find that no one speaks his language.
- Work is everything to the typical Riedran. This is both a point of personal pride and a form of religious duty. Riedrans have little time for leisure pursuits or interest in such things. What little time they take from work is typically devoted to religion: group meditation, ritual storytelling, or community service.
- Work is everything to the typical Riedran. This is both a point of personal pride and a form of religious duty. Riedrans have little time for leisure pursuits or interest in such things. What little time they take from work is typically devoted to religion: group meditation, ritual storytelling, or community service. Vice is hard to find. Riedrans are strictly monogamous. They avoid the recreational use of alcohol, dreamlily, or similar substances. They do not gamble, though they do play a game called Path -- a strategy game using round stones, which can be played on any flat surface.
- Riedran priests are rarely spellcasters, though a few are telepaths or seers. The role of the priest is to provide spiritual guidance, to remove doubt, and to aid and inspire the people. If outsiders are causing trouble in the community, it falls to the priest to gather the people and confront the problem.
- Honesty and community are critical values. Riedrans will always band together to help one another, and

anyone starting a brawl in a Riedran community should be prepared to take on everyone on the street. And aside from agents of the Dreaming Dark, Riedrans are scrupulously honest.

- An average Riedran dresses in black, white, or brown clothing. While basic designs are simple, Riedrans often use embroidery as a form of meditation, weaving complex designs along the hems of clothing. The colors blue and red are reserved for the Inspired, and the robes of Inspired lords are covered with labyrinthine patterns of color.

- Riedran cuisine uses simple base materials, but flavor is enhanced by combinations of spices. Gluttony is frowned upon, but there is nothing wrong with enjoying good food after a long day's work. Riedrans typically drink fruit juice or hot spiced water.

- Finally, Riedran body language is somewhat different from that of Khorvaire. Riedrans are raised not to fidget, and they stand perfectly still when talking. It is considered a token of respect to meet the gaze of someone you are speaking to. Riedrans will never verbally interrupt a speaker, but they indicate intent with gaze -- looking down if they have a comment to make, or looking to the side if they disagree with the speaker or are not interested in what he has to say. The degree of motion is as expressive as tone of voice. Thus, Riedrans often maintain an outward appearance of calm -- while in fact, a sharp turn of the head can be the same as a yell.

These are just a few examples of Riedran customs, which further vary by province and individual; but hopefully, this provides you with something with which to work.

Riedrans are neither monsters nor slaves. Riedra is a foreign culture, and the mannerisms of a Riedran may seem strange to most inhabitants of the Five Nations. But the Riedrans and their Inspired lords are not feared in the Five Nations; if anything, they are being welcomed by a continent in need of assistance, and people find the beauty and exotic nature of the Inspired to be intriguing.

Playing a Riedran

Riedra is an unusual choice for a region of origin. Most Riedrans consider their homeland to be a paradise, a peaceful realm free of crime and doubt. The people of Khorvaire are misguided and chaotic, prone to violence and undisciplined behavior. Some must come to Khorvaire to serve the needs of the Inspired, conducting trade and doing what needs to be done, but this is a dreaded fate. So why would a Riedran join a party of barbarians and live the unpredictable life of an adventurer? Consider the following ideas.

The Rebellious Exile. The Inspired have woven a masterful weapon of propaganda and manipulation. But there will always be those who discover secrets they weren't meant to know, a few who believe the kalashtar, or who otherwise come to despise the lords of Dal Quor. Are you a psion? Perhaps you were recruited to serve as a human agent of the Dreaming Dark, but turned against your new masters once you discovered their true nature. You can never convince your countrymen, and if you try, they will assume that you are possessed by a fiend and are trying to seduce them away from the path of righteousness. But if you were wrong about the Inspired, perhaps you're wrong about the people of Khorvaire. Perhaps nobility is hidden within them. And perhaps you can find allies in your fight -- a battle that will continue until your death.

The Spy. With the permission of your Dungeon Master, you could be a sleeper agent for the Dreaming Dark. You are human, but you have a patron -- a quori spirit who visits you in your dreams and gives you instructions. The Dreaming Dark is interested in the player characters; it has seen their potential. For now, you are simply to cement your bond with them and to build your skills. As time passes, you receive instructions -- some clear, some cryptic. Perhaps you can steer your group to serve the greater goals of the Dreaming Dark.

This option should be used with great care; if you are ordered to fight your companions, you might be forced to leave the group. Discuss things with your DM and make sure that you have the same vision of your future. One possibility is that you will learn more about the Dreaming Dark as you adventure -- and that you will become a rebel in time. The second possibility is that you will never be ordered to do anything that directly conflicts with the goals of the group. Depending on the plans of the DM, the Dreaming Dark could intend to wait for centuries before moving against Khorvaire: In the meantime, it has no love for the Lords of Dust, the Order of the Emerald Claw, the Cults of the Dragon Below, or any of the other forces that threaten the world. Thus, it could be that the enemy of an enemy can serve as a friend.

The Evangelist. Riedra is helping Khorvaire recover from the war. In addition to providing material aid (for a reasonable price), they have sent a number of agents of goodwill. In contrast to many of your countrymen, you are outgoing and willing to talk to strangers. You pity the people of Khorvaire, who lack the guidance of the Inspired. Search for ways to help the people around you. Inspire them with your actions. Help them defeat criminals and establish order -- all the while explaining how such problems would never arise in Riedra. Perhaps, with guidance and discipline, some of your companions will be reborn as Riedrans!

Whatever your path, when playing a Riedran keep the following things in mind.

- **Khorvaire Is a Land of Savages.** War. Organized crime. Fire-worshiping churches. Greedy dragonmarked houses, thirsty for gold. Whether you revere the Inspired or have turned against them, you'll still consider Khorvaire to be a land of chaos and misery.
- **Nonhumans?** Riedra is largely populated by humans. If you're from Riedra, you'll naturally view nonhumans as strange and untrustworthy -- especially shifty creatures like changelings or magical things like the warforged. Worst of all are the kalashtar. As a Riedran, you know that the kalashtar want to destroy the Inspired. The kalashtar are dangerous and deceptive creatures touched by demons. Don't trust anything a kalashtar says, and oppose them when you can.
- **Magic Is Dangerous.** Psionic abilities come from within, channeling the power of will and imagination. But arcane and divine magic are the result of trafficking with fiends and demons. Even if the spellcaster doesn't know what she's doing, she is placing her soul in jeopardy by channeling these forces. You can remain in a party with a wizard or cleric, but be sure to express your concern and to warn her to be cautious in the use of her powers.
- **The Inspired Are the Repositories of Wisdom.** Other people know nothing about the Inspired. Unless you're a rebel, you will not even listen to any attempt to malign your leaders. Your faith is absolute. The Inspired are guided by the brightest souls of the past. They brought your nation out of war and revealed the path to peace. They have made your world a paradise. The people of Khorvaire traffic with fiends on a regular basis; any such claims concerning your leaders are clearly deceptions.
- **Follow the Path of Discipline and Virtue.** In Riedra, all forms of vice are strictly discouraged. Such things are certain to harm your spiritual evolution, and what fool would sacrifice eternity for a few hours of physical pleasure or the empty pursuit of wealth? The greatest virtues in life are to assist others, to serve the Inspired, and to fulfill your role in society. Needless to say, if you're a spy for the Dreaming Dark, you'll have been taught to deceive (and likely be quite good at it). But the typical Riedran is honest and hard-working, placing duty and the needs of friends ahead of personal comfort.

Native Riedrans speak Riedran instead of Common; however, most Riedrans who come to Khorvaire learn the Common tongue, either as a bonus language or by spending skill points.

So What's So Bad?

Reading this article, you might be left with the impression that Riedra is a utopia. The people are honest, content, and hard-working. War and crime are virtually unknown. So why don't we want the Inspired to take over Khorvaire?

The Riedrans don't believe that they are slaves or subjects of a tyranny, but that doesn't make it untrue. They live in a cage with bars made of tradition and propaganda, reinforced by psionic manipulation and a religion designed to serve the needs of the Inspired. There's no crime, because most people can't even conceive of committing a crime -- and those who can quickly vanish, though any Riedran will see this as being for the good of the nation. There's little room for advancement or change: You expect to earn change in your next life through your hard service in this one. The words of the Inspired are not to be questioned by those below them, and you take comfort in having this divine guidance. A world under the Inspired would be stable and peaceful, and the people might even be happy -- but they wouldn't be free.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

Druids of Khorvaire, Part One

By Keith Baker

The ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* adds a number of options for druids, including mechanical benefits and a nation driven largely by druidic beliefs. However, these options raise additional questions. How far are the sects spread across the land? Do you have to be a member of a sect to be a druid? What happens to your dragonmark when you use wild shape? This three-part article will examine a host of issues tied to the druids of Eberron and take a closer look at druids beyond the Eldeen Reaches, from the blood guardians of the Valenar to the savage druids of the Demon Wastes.

The Role of the Sect

The *Eberron Campaign Setting* presents five druidic sects: the Wardens of the Wood, the Ashbound, the Children of Winter, the Gatekeepers, and the Greensingers. Each sect has unique goals, traditions, and beliefs. The Gatekeepers seek to protect the natural world from unnatural horrors, while the Children of Winter believe that nature will soon scour the world with plague and disaster. Each group has one or more feats that provide a druid with unique abilities associated with the teachings of his sect. You do not have to be a member of a sect to be a druid, and you don't have to take the associated feat to be a member of a sect. Being a member of a sect is a matter of belief and backstory, and as long as you and your Dungeon Master can come to an agreement on your story, you can have a tie to any sect... or none at all. You may believe that Eberron sees through the eyes of all living things, and the thunder is her voice. That Eberron slumbers, and when she wakes she will shatter every city. That civilization is part of Eberron's plan for the world, and just as the rabbit digs a burrow, a human is expected to build a city. Like any cleric, you should have a central pillar for your faith, but like a cleric, you don't have to adhere to one of the major religions.

The ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* presents feats that are not tied to a specific druid sect: Beast Totem, Beast Shape, and Beast Companion. In addition, a DM can always choose to provide access to an appropriate feat to members of a new sect he has created. For example, the King's Forest of Breland is home to a small band of druids and rangers known as the Shadows of the Forest, which is described in more detail below. While the Shadows have no ties to the Wardens of the Wood, their goals and methods are very similar and the DM may allow a Shadow druid to take the Warden Initiate feat... with a clear understanding between DM and player that this doesn't represent a tie to the Wardens, and that the Wardens will not recognize the druid or her order if she travels to the Reaches. A sect feat represents a particular style of druidic training and should be reserved for members of an organized group. However, that group can certainly have developed in parallel to the Eldeen sects, instead of being part of them.

The Shadows of the Forest

The King's Forest fills southeastern Breland. This rain forest spans hundreds of square miles and provides a home to a wide array of fantastic creatures. However, over the course of centuries, logging and industry have diminished it. The Knight Rangers of Breland patrol the borders and do their best to counter the actions of poachers and brigands, but the forest is vast and the Brelish rangers rarely venture into its depths. The deep forest has other defenders: druids and rangers who slip through the shadows, as stealthy as the displacer beasts that accompany them. These are the Shadows of the Forest.

The Shadows of the Forest act to control the dangerous beasts, doing what they can to keep such

The Druidic Language

All druids have one thing in common: knowledge of the Druidic language, which druids receive as a bonus language upon taking their first level of the class. What does this mean? Why would an Eldeen Greensinger and a Talenta mask-weaver speak the same language, not to mention the hermit who has never encountered another druid? If the Gatekeepers were trained by a dragon, why do they know Druidic instead of Draconic?

Druidic is not a normal language. You don't learn Druidic in the same way that you'd study Sylvan, and even if you know it, you can't teach it to a friend any more than you could teach her to cast *detect snares and pits*. As you master your first level of druid, you learn many magical mysteries. You learn how to speak with animals, how to calm them, and how to hide from them. You unlock the secrets of fire. You learn to mend flesh with a touch, and how to ask the plants to entangle and trap your enemies. These are just a few of your secrets, and the Druidic tongue is another. Many druids believe that it is the first language -- the primal language of Eberron herself. Some claim to have found Druidic inscriptions carved in the sides of mountains or written in the drifting clouds; the DM will have to decide if these tales are truth or fancy.

Since only druids can learn Druidic, speaking this language is a way to identify yourself to other druids you may encounter. If you're about to be boiled alive by kobolds, an appeal to the kobold druid spoken in Druidic could save your life. However, not all druids are allies. A peaceful hermit may despise the violent actions of the Ashbound or the doom-driven work of the Children of Winter. Speaking in Druidic will establish a basic bond, but if you just killed the opposing druid's totem companion, it's not going to get you off the hook.

Next: A further look at issues facing the druids of Eberron!

monsters from venturing near the fringes of the forest and the trade roads. But the Shadows have also fought loggers and laid snares for legitimate hunters, including the royal party of the King's Hunt. Many of the Knight Rangers are grateful for the aid of the Shadows, but by the laws of the land, these druids are trespassers and poachers: A knight is duty-bound to bring Shadows to justice.

Five bands of Shadows are in the King's Forest, each with approximately twenty-five members. They remain in constant motion, using Survival to forage for food and shelter. The Shadows of the Forest claim to hear the whispers of the wild, a call that guides them in their travels. Occasionally this pulls a Shadow away from his band; it may even draw him out of the King's Forest and onto the path of the adventurer.

Most of the Shadows are humans and shifters, though one of the five bands is comprised entirely of gnomes. The Shadows have a close affinity with displacer beasts, represented by the Beast Totem, Beast Shape, and Beast Companion feats. They are masters of stealth, and many Shadow druids take the Guerilla Warrior feat (from *Heroes of Battle*) or a level or two in the ranger class to enhance their skill with Hide and Move Silently. The techniques of the sect are similar to those of the Wardens of the Wood, and at the DM's discretion a Shadow character may take the Warden Initiate feat.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

Druids of Khorvaire, Part Two

By Keith Baker

This week, we look at a grab bag of issues facing druids in the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*.

Warforged Druids

Many people assume that warforged cannot become druids. The warforged are constructs crafted by human hands; what bond could a warforged possess with the world of nature? And yet, the warforged are *living* constructs. A large part of the body of a warforged is composed of fibrous strands not unlike the roots of a tree. Druidic life is a rare path for a warforged to follow, but a few have sought to explore their role as living creatures and to strengthen their bonds to the natural world.

Related Series
Interested in learning more about the rules governing warforged? The August *Rules of the Game* column explored this topic, examining the particulars of living constructs. Also be sure to consult *Save My Game*: Managing Artificers and Constructs and *Dragonshards*: Warforged Parts One and Two.

A warforged druid faces a number of challenges. Both the Adamantine Body and Mithril Body feats cause a warforged druid to lose access to druidic abilities, just as if he was wearing metal armor. The only option for a warforged who wants improved armor and the full power of the druid is the Ironwood Body feat presented in *Races of Eberron*. On the positive side, both *goodberries* and wild shape are healing effects that are not actually part of the healing subschool; as such, both of these provide full benefits to the warforged druid.

Wild shape is a marvelous ability for a warforged druid, allowing the construct to transcend its partially inanimate nature and become a creature of flesh and blood. While in wild shape, a warforged is no longer considered a construct: it loses access to its racial immunities and any armor bonus it possesses from composite plating or Ironwood Body. It cannot be repaired using *repair damage*, but it receives the full benefit of spells of the healing subschool. While *Races of Eberron* states that warforged druids maintain armor bonuses and racial immunities in animal form, this is incorrect.

So far, those warforged that have joined established druid sects have gravitated toward the Wardens of the Wood, though the elder Gatekeepers have shown great interest in these possibly immortal guardians.

While some warforged druids are drawn to the Eldeen sects, reports from scavengers and scouts suggest that a new sect is forming in the Mournland: a band of warforged druids who call themselves the Followers of the Broken Path. These warforged seek to heal the damage that has been done to the Mournland and hope to learn about their own bonds to nature by restoring life to this broken land. A party of adventurers traveling through the Mournland could find an unusual oasis blossoming under the care of a group of the Followers; such an area could prove to be an exception to the rule of healing spells failing to function in the Mournland, and if not, a Follower druid could always assist wounded travelers by supplying *goodberries*... though the druids may ask a favor in return. There is much work to be done, and there are always terrors to fight in the Mournland.

Druids and Dragonmarks

While the mercantile mindset of the dragonmarked houses does not produce many druids, members of House Vadalis sometimes feel the call of the wild, while heirs of House Lyrandar feel a deeper bond with wind and water. And in the end, any character could choose the path of the druid. So how does the dragonmark interact with the abilities of the druid?

A druid keeps his dragonmark while using wild shape. The mark actually remains visible as a pattern on the druid's fur or hide, and the druid can make full use of its abilities. However, the mark is not viable: a dragonmarked druid who assumes the shape of a stallion cannot sire a line of dragonmarked horses. Recognizing a dragonmark pattern on an animal requires a Spot check; this has a base DC of 15, plus modifiers based on the size of the creature and size of the mark:

Creature Size: Tiny +8, Small +4, Medium +0, Large -4, Huge -8

Mark Size: Least +8, Lesser +4, Greater +0, Siberys -4

Elemental Form: DC +8. While the mark remains even in elemental form, it is especially hard to make out: it is a vague pattern etched in air or fire.

As such, spotting a least mark on a Tiny creature would take a Spot check with a DC of 31.

A dragonmarked druid can use the thousand faces ability to conceal his mark, just as if using *alter self*.

Animal Companions and Templates

Unless she is specifically granted the ability to do so by a class feature or feat, a druid or ranger cannot take a templated creature as an animal companion. According to the *Player's Handbook*, an animal companion is "completely typical for its kind" except for abilities granted by the druid, and the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* clarifies that druids and rangers cannot have magebred companions. A druid does not purchase her animal companion, nor does she find it; she calls it to her through a 24-hour ritual of prayer. This is why the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* provides alternate companion

Reincarnation in Eberron

Powerful druids possess the ability to reincarnate those who fall in battle. This power is not often called into play; many druids respect the natural cycle of life, and furthermore, with their general lack of interest in material possessions, few druids have immediate access to the rare and expensive oils and unguents that are required to perform the ritual. However, if a champion dies a truly unjust death or falls while performing a great service to the wild, a druid may choose to call his spirit back to the world of the living.

The following table includes changelings and shifters, along with shifted weights reflecting the roles of races in Eberron -- such as the strong druidic ties of the orcs. You cannot be reincarnated as a warforged, although a warforged can be reincarnated as a member of another race. Kalashtar are not on the list, but if this table generates a result of "human" when used on a kalashtar spirit, the character will instead return as a kalashtar. A kalashtar who returns as any other creature loses her bond to her quori spirit, which can be a terribly traumatic experience.

d%	Incarnation	Str	Dex	Con
01-03	Bugbear	+4	+2	+2
04-08	Changeling	+0	+0	+0
09-15	Dwarf	+0	+0	+2
16-22	Elf	+0	+2	-2
23-24	Gnoll	+4	+0	+2
25-31	Gnome	-2	+0	+2
32-37	Goblin	-2	+2	+0
38-42	Half-elf	+0	+0	+0
43-49	Half-orc	2	+0	+0
50-56	Halfling	-2	+2	+0
57-61	Hobgoblin	+0	+2	+2
62-71	Human	+0	+0	+0
72-73	Kobold	-4	+2	-2
74-78	Lizardfolk	2	+0	+2
79-88	Orc	+4	+0	+0

lists for druids of all regions. It's not a question of where you are, but where you first mastered the druidic mysteries. A Valenar druid can always call a Valenar riding horse; a druid of the Demon Wastes can never call a Valenar riding horse, but at 4th level she *can* call a horrid rat... one example of a class feature specifically allowing bonding with a templated creature!

Next: Druids of other cultures!

89-98	Shifter	+0	+2	+0
99	Troglodyte	+0	-2	+4
100	Other	?	?	

A character who possesses a dragonmark will keep his dragonmark even in his new form. However, he cannot pass the dragonmark to his descendants. So *reincarnation* makes it possible to find an orc with the Mark of Storm, but this will not produce an entire dynasty of dragonmarked orcs.

About the Author

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Dragonshards

Druids of Khorvaire, Part Three

By Keith Baker

Druids are found across Khorvaire, and the Siyal Marrain of the Valenar are quite different from the Gatekeepers of the Shadow Marches. The ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* and *Player's Guide to Eberron* focus on the druids of the western coast of Khorvaire. This article examines one of the druidic traditions of the east: the halflings of the Talenta Plains.

Mask Weavers

Where the Valenar warrior seeks to channel the spirit of his ancestor through his heroic deeds, the Talenta druid believes that her ancestors are all around her, affecting every aspect of life. The druid serves as the intermediary between the worlds and guides her people on the journey of life. The halflings believe that the dead are drawn to Dolurrh and must fight their way free to return to the world. A halfling possesses two tools to help him in this battle: his mount and his mask. The spirit of a halfling's mount joins with him in Dolurrh, and it is their combined strength that gives them the chance to return. His mask holds his spirit or the spirit of his mount -- whichever dies first -- preserving it so that they may be together in the afterlife; many say that when a rider bonds with a new mount, the spirit of the old will flow from his mask to join with that of the living beast. Some whisper of rituals a warrior can use to trap the spirits of his fallen enemies in his mask and use their strength as his own, though most say that such dark magic will corrupt the caster and transform him into a demon after death.

One of the first duties of the druid is to help her people craft their spirit masks, and as a result druids are often called mask weavers. The druid serves many other crucial roles in her community. She heals the sick and injured. She helps to find and train clawfeet, fastieths, and the other beasts that the nomadic tribes rely on. She serves as a diplomat for the tribe, both when dealing with other tribes and with the spirits of nature. And she acts as a storyteller and record keeper, preserving the oral traditions of her people and passing them down to the next generation.

Talenta Spirit Masks

The spirit mask serves as the divine focus for a druid who follows the mask weaver tradition. Druids have also learned to bind the favor of a particular spirit to a mask, creating wondrous items holding the power of *bull's strength*, *fox's cunning*, *cat's grace*, and similar spells. The halflings believe that once a rider and his mount are dead, the mask must be burnt to release the spirits within into Dolurrh. This does not prevent *raise dead* or any other spell that interacts with departed spirits from working on the owner or the mask. Whether there is any truth to the beliefs of the halflings is up to the DM!

The tales of the soul-eaters are stories told to frighten children. However, if a DM wants to explore these legends, adventurers could encounter halflings whose masks allow them to cast *death knell*... or worse still, masks that add the *Keeper's fang* quality to any weapon used by the wearer.

While the spirit mask may be as much a symbol as anything else, these masks are vitally important to the Talenta halflings. A halfling adventurer could be charged to recover the lost mask of a great hero, so that it can be destroyed in accord with the proper rituals.

While mask weavers recognize one another as peers, their first loyalty is to the other members of their tribe.

Even when a mask weaver dies without training a successor, a tribe will not turn to an outsider in search of aid; instead they will simply wait, confident that the spirits themselves will speak to one of the children of the tribe and teach him the secrets of the mask weavers. While it is rare for a mask weaver to leave his tribe, there are two ways it can happen. Occasionally a young druid is called forth by the spirits and ordered to go out into the world, in search of a hidden destiny that is far more important than his service to the tribe. The morbid alternative is when a tribe is destroyed. Even during feuds, enemy warriors will try to avoid harming a mask weaver, since many say this will bring bad luck to the slayer. As a result, a mask weaver may find herself the last surviving member of her tribe. Most of these orphans leave the Plains, searching for a new life in the wider world. Either of these could serve as background for an adventurer. Diplomacy, Heal, and Perform (oratory) are critical skills for a mask weaver. Talenta druids may take the Greensinger Initiate feat, though they have no ties to the Eldeen sect or to Thelanis; it is simply a case of parallel development based on the values and traditions of the mask weavers.

The druidic path is not the only way to show reverence for the spirits. Talenta clerics usually worship the sovereign Balinor, although halflings claim that Balinor was once a great hunter of the Talenta Plains. If a DM is using *Complete Divine*, the spirit shaman class is also suitable for Talenta priests.

Next: More druids of other cultures!

About the Author

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Dragonshards

Druids of Khorvaire, Part Four

By Keith Baker

This series on druids concludes with a look at another tradition of the east: the Horse Watchers of the Tairnadal elves, which are found in Valenar and Aerenal.

The Siyal Marrain (Horse Watchers)

The Tairnadal have tremendous respect for the power of nature. Many of the greatest heroes of the elves have been rangers, who combine martial skill with a magical bond to the natural world. During the uprising against the giants on Xen'drik, Tairnadal druids countered the magic of the giants with storm and thunder, and they bolstered the ranks of the elf army with the beasts of the wilds. A number of the druids joined the battle in animal form, and the greatest Tairnadal rangers rode into battle astride druids who used wild shape to assume the forms of mighty stallions. In one of the most fearsome battles of the uprising, a giant wizard of the Sul'at League laid a terrible curse on the opposing druids, forever binding them in animal form. The Tairnadal believe that the spirits of these champions of nature live on in their descendants, and they hold that these beings deserve the same respect as the other heroes of history. For a Tairnadal cavalry warrior, a horse is not simply a tool or a weapon: He is a brother striving toward the same destiny. Valenar rangers prize the ability to *speak with animals* as a way to strengthen their bond with their mounts. The typical Valenar ranger possesses a horse as her animal companion, and she believes that the improved abilities of the horse are a sign of the horse's ancestral guide. Druids capable of casting *awaken* are rare, but a few of the great champions of the modern age ride *awakened* steeds.

The druids of the Valenar serve two roles. First and foremost, they are charged to preserve the bloodline of the elven horses. The druids protect the breeding grounds, tend to injured horses, and help raise the young. These blood guardians mingle with the herd using wild shape and *speak with animals*, forging the bond between horse and elf from the earliest days. They also help to match elf and rider, working to forge the bond between

Warhorse, Valenar

Large Animal
Hit Dice: 4d8+16 (34 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 90 ft. (18 squares)
Armor Class: 15 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+11
Attack: Hoof +6 melee (1d4+4)
Full Attack: 2 hooves +6 melee (1d4+4)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Combative mount, low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +4
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 10
Skills: Jump +26, Listen +6, Spot +5
Feats: Endurance, Run
Environment: Warm plains
Organization: Domesticated
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 5-9 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: --

Most Valenar elves use riding horses, albeit trained for battle. However, a line of true Valenar warhorses exists. Such mounts are never sold, not even to the elves themselves: A warrior who seeks a Valenar warhorse must prove his worth to the Siyal Marrain and the horse itself. Valenar warhorses are fiercely loyal, and most will die before they will accept a rider of another race; however, in a few cases the Horse

rider and mount. Beyond this, the Siyal Marrain are warriors. Just as their ancestors fought the giants with lightning and flame, the druids of the modern day may ride with a warband, turning the power of nature against their enemies.

Horse Watchers typically possess maximum ranks in Handle Animal and Ride. Many take Mounted Combat and its related feats; the composite longbow is a traditional weapon of the order, and Mounted Archery is another common choice.

Druids of the Siyal Marrain cannot take any of the sect feats (Ashbound, Child of Winter, Gatekeeper Initiate, Greensinger Initiate, or Warden Initiate) presented in the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*. However, a Siyal druid does gain access to three additional spells, which are added to the druid spell list at the indicated level: 1st-level -- *mount*; 3rd-level -- *phantom steed*; 4th-level -- *spirit steed*. The druid loses access to these spells if she abandons the traditions of her people.

Valenar Horses

Watchers have helped those who have performed great services for the Valenar to form a bond with one of these steeds.

A Tairnadal druid can take a Valenar warhorse as an animal companion at 4th level, following the standard rules for advanced animal companions. A Valenar warhorse can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he or she makes a successful Ride check.

Combative Mount (Ex): The rider of a Valenar warhorse gets a +2 circumstance bonus on Ride checks. The warhorse is proficient with light, medium, and heavy armor, although the Valenar rarely use heavy barding.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a Valenar warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301-600 pounds; and a heavy load 601-900 pounds. A Valenar warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

The Valenar riding horse can be found on page 289 of the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*. Aside from its enhanced speed and Dexterity, a Valenar horse can live for up to ten times the lifespan of a normal horse; the Tairnadal attribute this longevity to the elven blood they believe runs through the veins of the steed. A typical Valenar cavalry soldier has served with his horse for decades, and the two have a tremendously strong bond: A Valenar will certainly seek vengeance against anyone who kills his horse.

Ever since the Valenar arrived on Khorvaire, the magebreeders of House Vadalis have sought to capture Valenar steeds so that they can produce a dynasty of improved horses; many a Vadalis baron dreams of the gold that he could acquire from selling herds of magebred Valenar horses. To date, however, their efforts have failed. House Vadalis has acquired a number of Valenar horses over the decades, but it has yet to make them reproduce in captivity; while the horses do not appear to be sterile or under the effects of malign enchantment, even those compelled to reproduce with *charm animal* simply produce normal offspring, lacking the superior abilities of the Valenar horse. House Vadalis sages have come up with a number of different theories to explain this mystery. Some say that the enhanced abilities of the Valenar horses are a result of being raised in the powerful Irian manifest zones of Aerenal. Others think that there is a small herd of breeding stallions that the elves have kept hidden from spies and thieves. A third theory espouses the idea that the enhanced abilities *are* the result of a bond to elven ancestors, just as the Tairnadal claim, and that horses bred without the blessing of a Blood Guardian never receive their full gifts. Whatever the truth, House Vadalis still yearns to overcome this obstacle, and any adventurers who can solve the mystery and help them produce their own herds of Valenar horses would be rewarded handsomely!

About the Author

Dragonshards

Strike Force: Dhakaan

By Keith Baker

The adventure is going well . . . too well. Clever tactics and a few lucky critical hits have demolished encounters that were supposed to be major challenges, and unless something happens the adventure will come to an early and unsatisfying end. Enter the strike force. Depending on the needs of the night, these characters can be deadly adversaries, invaluable allies, or a way to add color to a scene. This article examines the Heirs of Dhakaan -- the elite warriors of Darguun.

Structure and Tactics

The Heirs of Dhakaan are the scions of a martial tradition that once dominated Khorvaire. For thousands of years they have been in hiding. Now they have returned. Dhakaani troops are among the most dangerous soldiers in Khorvaire; they are skilled, disciplined, well-equipped, and utterly devoted to their clans. If the clans were to come together under one leader, they might threaten Khorvaire itself. But for now they remain divided, squabbling among themselves to determine the rightful heir of Dhakaan. Some clans are engaged in full-scale wars against their brethren. Others comb the continent for relics of the ancient empire, believing that the symbolic and magical power of these items are the key to victory.

The Dhakaani are far deadlier than their Ghaal'dar cousins, and they should prove an unpleasant surprise for a party used to savage or undisciplined humanoids. Dhakaani soldiers act with elegant precision, shifting targets or formations on a single word from their commanders. Dhakaani leaders are seasoned veterans who can analyze any situation and determine the most dangerous threats. They seek to incapacitate spellcasters as quickly as possible and combine attacks to eliminate foes.

The weaknesses of this Dhakaani force include poor Will saves and a complete lack of divine magic, due to the agnostic nature of Dhakaani culture. The dirge singer can heal, and a taarka'khesh scout can attempt to use the Use Magic Device skill to trigger a *wand of cure light wounds*. But the lack of clerical support can prove a drawback against a well-balanced opponent or an undead foe.

Whenever possible, Dhakaani scout the terrain before battle, spreading missile support into key locations and letting snipers take advantage of Plunging Shot. Stealthy bugbears draw close to the enemy before raging into battle, followed by the hobgoblin troopers. While the bugbears are taught to hurl themselves into the foe, the troopers use Combat Expertise and Improved Trip to harangue enemies. The dirge singer uses *hold person* or *confusion* against enemy melee champions and tanglefoot bags against obvious spellcasters, while inspiring her troops with bardic music.

Between the poor Will saving throws of the melee troops and the potential of a *fireball* to devastate a group of soldiers, the rare wizards assigned to Dhakaani units generally take defensive roles: an evoker might start the battle with a *fireball*, but on subsequent rounds he'll hold his action for counterspelling until he's certain enemy spellcasters have been neutralized.

Dhakaani Encounters

You can add a Dhakaani strike force into an adventure in many ways. Consider the following possibilities.

- The party has been sent to plunder a Dhakaani ruin. When they arrive, a goblinoid troop is already camped around the entrance and exploring the dungeon.
- After the party emerges from a dungeon, they are challenged by a Dhakaani force: The leader demands that the adventurers hand over a Dhakaani relic they have stolen.
- A Dhakaani ruin turns out to be occupied by powerful aberrations . . . creatures far too powerful for the party to overcome alone. A Dhakaani force arrives on the scene, and together they could overcome the aberrations. Are they willing to share their loot, giving the Dhakaani the artifacts for which they have come?
- The party comes upon a battle between Dhakaani goblins and Valenar elves. Do they try to avoid it, or do they pick a side? There's no telling who's in the right, and either force could become a powerful enemy.
- The party walks into an inn -- and discovers a troop of Dhakaani soldiers in the common room. Are the gobinoids here for a sinister reason, or just looking for a hot meal and shelter from the rain? Can they pass the night without triggering an incident?
- A disguised Dhakaani dirge singer has worked her way into an academic institution and is using their resources to help her recover treasures of the empire. She could oppose the party, or she could employ them.
- After dealing with a group of adventurers and coming to respect their prowess, a Dhakaani clan could ask the adventurers to help them initiate diplomatic relations with one of the Five Nations or dragonmarked houses.

The Soldiers of Dhakaan

The composition of a Dhakaani unit varies based on the nature of the mission. Seven different characters are provided below, providing the basic tools for creating different units. A covert action team includes snipers and scouts led by a dirge singer, whereas a shock troop relies on bladebreakers, troopers, and an evoker.

Dirge Singer

The dirge singers are the spiritual leaders of the goblinoids, and they are also trained to serve as spies and diplomats. Dirge singers are almost always female.

Dirge Singer CR 8
Female hobgoblin bard 7
N Medium humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +5
Languages Common, Elven, Goblin, Gnome, Orc

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14
hp 29 (7 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +4 (1d4-1/19-20) or
Ranged mwk shortbow +9 (1d6/x3)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4
Special Actions bardic music 7/day(*suggestion* [DC 18], inspire competence, inspire courage +2, *fascinate* 3 creatures, countersong)
Combat Gear 2 tanglefoot bags, *circle of sound* (*ECS* 271), *potion of invisibility, potion of protection from arrows 10/magic, wand of cure light wounds*
Bard Spells Known (CL 7th, 20% arcane spell failure chance):
3rd (1/day) -- *blink, confusion* (DC 18)
2nd (3/day) -- *cure moderate wounds, detect thoughts* (DC 16), *hold person* (DC 17), *mirror image*
1st (5/day) -- *charm person* (DC 16), *cure light wounds, disguise self*
0 (3/day) -- *daze* (DC 15), *detect magic, lullaby, mage hand, message, prestidigitation*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 18*
SQ bardic knowledge +11
Feats Iron Will, Song of the Heart[ECS], Spell Focus (enchantment)
Skills Bluff +12, Diplomacy +19, Disguise +9 (+9 with *disguise self*, +2 when acting), Gather Information +10, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (history) +7, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Hide +7, Intimidate +10, Move Silently +7, Perform (song) +13, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +5, Spot +5
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork chain shirt, dagger, potion bracer, *circle of sound*** (*ECS* 271), *cloak of Charisma +2*.* **If no one else in the unit has a *circle of sound*, replace this with a *ring of protection +1.*

Chain Master Champion

The flail and spiked chain are traditional weapons of the empire, and those who master these weapons earn respect in the eyes of their peers. This skilled soldier could serve as the leader of an elite squad of troopers or as the bodyguard of an important dirge singer.

Chain Master Champion CR 8
Male hobgoblin fighter 6/exotic weapon master 1
LN Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Elven, Goblin

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19
hp 50 (7 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee*+1 spiked chain* +14/+9 (2d4+7) or
Melee*+1 spiked chain* +12/+12/+7 (2d4+7) with flurry of strikes or
Ranged composite longbow +8/+3 (1d8+4/x3)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +11
Atk Options flurry of strikes, Power Attack
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure light wounds* (both in backpack), 3 *potions of enlarge person* (1 in backpack), *potion of cure moderate wounds,* and *potion of protection from arrows 10/magic*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Combat Expertise[B], Darguun Mauler[RoE], Improved Trip, Iron Will, Power Attack[B], Weapon Focus (chain weapons), Weapon Specialization (chain weapons)
Skills Climb +3, Craft (armorsmith) +2, Craft (weaponsmith) +7, Heal +2, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (history) +2, Move Silently +0, Ride +4
Possessions *+1 full plate*, *+1 spiked chain*, mighty composite longbow (+4 damage), quiver of 20 arrows, potion bracer, *circle of sound* or a *ring of protection +1* (depending on which better serves the needs of the mission)

Hobgoblin Heavy Infantry Trooper

Not all Dhakaani soldiers possess this level of skill, and most soldiers in a Dhakaani wouldn't have potions, but when the Clans send troops into the outer world they send their best.

Hobgoblin Heavy Infantry Trooper CR 5
Male hobgoblin fighter 4
LN Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Elven, Goblin

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 38 (4 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk flail +8 (1d8+3) or
Ranged mwk composite longbow +6 (1d8+3/x3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7
Atk Options Block Arrow, Improved Trip, Shield Wall
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure light wounds, potion of enlarge person*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Block Arrow[B] [HoB], Combat Expertise[B], Improved Trip, Iron Will, Shield Wall[B] [HoB]
Skills Climb +2, Craft (any one) +6, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (history) +2, Move Silently -1, Ride +5
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork full plate, masterwork flail, heavy steel shield, masterwork composite longbow, quiver with 20 arrows, potion bracer

Tactics: Shield Wall provides the trooper with an additional +2 shield bonus to AC when he is adjacent to an ally using a shield. Block Arrow allows him to deflect one missile attack each round, providing he is aware of the attack and using his shield.

Hobgoblin Sniper

Hobgoblin Sniper CR 5
Male hobgoblin ranger 2/fighter 2
N Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +5
Languages Common, Goblin

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14
hp 31 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +0

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee flail +6 (1d8+2) or
Ranged+*1 composite longbow* +9 (1d8+3/x3) or
Ranged+*1 composite longbow* +7/+7 (1d8+3/x3) with Rapid Shot
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Atk Options favored enemy* +2, Point Blank Shot, Plunging Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Ready Shot
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure light wounds*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8
SQ wild empathy +1 (-3 magical beasts)
Feats Point Blank Shot[B], Plunging Shot[HoB], Precise Shot[B], Rapid Shot[B], Ready Shot[HoB], Track[B]
Skills Climb +6, Heal +5, Hide +8, Knowledge (Dungeoneering) +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +10, Ride +5, Spot +5, Survival +5
Possessions combat gear masterwork chain shirt, buckler, flail, +*1 composite longbow* (Strength rating 14), darkweave cloak. Potion bracer with two *potions of cure light wounds*

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*Common choices for favored enemy are human, goblinoid, or elf.

Tactics: Plunging Shot allows the sniper to inflict an additional +1d6 points of damage with ranged attacks against opponents that are at least 30 feet below him. Ready Shot allows him to inflict +3d6 damage with a ranged attack against a charging opponent within 15 feet. When the sniper is using his buckler, his AC is 19 (touch 14, flat-footed 15).

Bugbear Bladebreaker

Bladebreakers are bugbear shock troops. They are raised to seek glory in battle, but they are not savages; for a Dhakaani bugbear, rage is a carefully cultivated state of combat frenzy. They understand the importance of tactics in battle and heed the orders of their hobgoblin commanders. Bladebreakers may be male or female.

Bugbear Bladebreaker CR 5
Male bugbear barbarian 1
N Medium humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +1, Spot +2
Languages Common, Goblin

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 17
hp 43 (4 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee mwk greatsword +12 (2d6+12/19-20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +9
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, rage 1/day (7 rounds)
Combat Gear*potion of enlarge person,* 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, tanglefoot bag, 2 thunderstones

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Abilities Str 26, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6
SQ fast movement
Feats Cleave, Power Attack
Skills Climb +5, Hide +7, Jump +5, Listen +1, Move Silently +6, Ride +4, Spot +2, Survival +1
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork chain shirt, masterwork greatsword, masterwork composite longbow, quiver with 20 arrows, darkweave cloak, potion bracer

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When not raging, the bugbear has the following changed statistics:
AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 19
hp decrease by 12
SV Fort +5, Will +1
Melee mwk greatsword +10 (2d6+9/19-20) or
Ranged mwk composite longbow +7 (1d8+6/x3)
Grp +9
Abilities Str 22, Con 14
Skills Climb +5, Hide +7, Jump +5, Listen +1, Move Silently +6, Ride +4, Spot +2, Survival +1

Goblin Taarka'khesh Scout

Mercenaries from the Silent Wolf clans, the taarka'khesh can be found serving any Dhakaani leader. As with all the troops in this article, this is an exceptional scout; lower-level taarka'khesh can be found in Darguun.

Goblin Taarka'khesh Scout CR 6
Male goblin rogue 3/scout 3
N Small humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10
Languages Common, Elven, Goblin

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 16; uncanny dodge
hp 32 (6 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +5, **Ref** +11, **Will** +3

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee mwk rapier +7 (1d4+1/18-20) or
Ranged +10 mwk composite shortbow (1d4+1/x3) or
Ranged +8/+8 mwk composite shortbow (1d4+1/x3) with Rapid Shot
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +1
Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, skirmish (+1d6), sneak attack +2d6
Combat Gear*potion of invisibility,* 2 *potions of cure light wounds,* tanglefoot bag, 2 thunderstones

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Abilities Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 6
SQ battle fortitude +1, fast movement, trackless stepm trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Point Blank Shot, Quick Reconnoiter[CAdv], Rapid Shot
Skills Balance +5, Climb +3, Disable Device +9, Escape Artist +6, Hide +16, Listen +10, Move Silently +16, Open Lock +12, Ride +8, Spot +10, Search +10, Survival +3, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +4

Possessions combat gear plus *+1 chain shirt*, masterwork rapier, masterwork composite shortbow, *cloak of resistance +1*, potion bracer, masterwork thieves tools, and either a *circle of sound* or a *ring of protection +1*, depending on which better serves the needs of the mission

Goblin Evoker

The Dhakaani have come to respect the tactical power of wizardry. Most of the clans have only a few wizards, and these characters are assigned only to critical missions. The CR of the character has been increased due to the value of her gear.

Goblin Evoker CR 7
Female goblin evoker 5
N Small humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Goblin, empathic link

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AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11
hp 19 (5 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee dagger +1 (1d3-2/19-20) or
Ranged dagger +5 (1d3-2/19-20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp-**4
Combat Gear*wand of dispel magic,* 2 *potion of cure light wounds* (backpack), *potion of invisibility, potion of protection from arrows 10/magic, potion of cure moderate wounds*
Spells Prepared (CL 5th):
3rd -- *dispel magic, fireball* (2, DC 17)
2nd -- *glitterdust* (DC 16)*, invisibility, scorching ray* (2, +5 ranged touch)
1st -- *enlarge person* (2), *mage armor, magic missile* (2)
0 -- *detect magic, mage hand, message, prestidigitation*

Abilities Str 6, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 6
SQ familiar, share spells
Feats Alertness[B] (if familiar is within 5 ft.), Enlarge Spell, Scribe Scroll[B], Sudden Maximize [CArc], and one of the following: Brew Potion[B], Craft Magic Arms and Armor[B], Craft Wand[B], or Sudden Empower[B] [CArc]
Skills Concentration +9, Craft (alchemy) +10, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Move Silently +6, Ride +6, Spellcraft +14
Possessions combat gear plus dagger, darkweave cloak, wizard's spellshard, potion bracer, and either a *circle of sound* or a *ring of protection +1*, depending on which better serves the needs of the mission
Spellbook spells prepared plus 0 -- all except necromancy or enchantment; 1st -- *alarm, comprehend languages, shocking grasp*; 2nd -- *arcane lock, continual flame, gust of wind*; 3rd -- *displacement, Leomund's tiny hut*

Rat Familiar CR --
N Tiny magical beast
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages empathic link

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 15
hp 9 (5 HD)
Resist improved evasion

Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares), climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.
Melee bite +4 (1d3-4)
Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
BaseAtk +2; **Grp** -6

Abilities Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 2
Feats Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +10, Climb +12, Concentration +8, Hide +14, Listen +1, Move Silently +10, Swim +10, Spot +1

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

Dragonshards

The Medusas of Droaam

By Keith Baker

Eberron is a world of magic. Many forms of life have been shaped by magical forces. This can be seen in the minor illusion-weaving ability of the gnomes, the teleporting blink dog, or the petrifying gaze of the medusa. The deadly power of a medusa can certainly inspire terror, and thinking of this creature as a simple monster is easy. But medusas are not savage predators, roaming the wastes in search of prey. The medusas of Cazhaak Draal are, on average, more intelligent than most humans, and they have a proud city-state in the midst of Droaam. The power of the medusas is a potent weapon in the arsenal of Droaam. But what role do medusas play in the monster nation? How are they seen in the outside world? And what can you expect when dealing with them?

The Kingdom of Stone

The medusas were born in Khyber, and no one on the surface knows the extent of their subterranean civilization. In 778 YK, a force of medusas emerged from the underworld and laid claim to the city of Cazhaak Draal, an ancient goblin metropolis that had been abandoned since the daelkyr incursion. Over the course of the last two hundred years, the medusas renovated Cazhaak Draal, repairing the ruins and domesticating many of the dangerous creatures found in the region. For the most part the medusas were content in their tiny kingdom: Cazhaak Draal was far larger than their numbers required, and many treasures and wonders existed in the ancient city. Explorers who ventured into the Stonelands rarely returned, but the medusas had little interest in the outside world.

This changed in 985 YK, when a mysterious visitor came to speak to the Queen of Stone: a gray-robed hag, who met the medusa's gaze without fear. Sora Teraza spoke with Queen Sheshka from sunrise to sunset, and after the hag departed, Sheshka spent the evening in silent contemplation. The next day she told her people to prepare for great change. Over the course of the next year she brought together a corps of medusas, preparing them for service in foreign lands. When the Daughters of Sora Kell assumed power in 986 YK, representatives of Cazhaak Draal were quickly dispatched to the Great Crag. Today medusa architects direct the ongoing construction of Droaam's capital. Medusas hold many positions of power, both in Droaam and in the monstrous communities that have since spread across Khorvaire; in Sharn, the medusa Kasslak maintains order in the dangerous district of Malleon's Gate, while a medusa named Harash is the second-in-command of Sharn's Daask cell. The deadly power of a medusa commands respect, but in a nation of ogres, minotaurs, and harpies,

the keen intellect of the medusa is often more useful than its petrifying gaze.

The people of Cazhaak Draal have prospered since the rise of the hags, and for the moment, the Queen of Stone is content to serve. The Daughters of Sora Kell are formidable enemies, and Sheshka does not have the power to challenge them. But the medusa queen is ambitious and cunning, and she is always searching for ways to increase her influence.

Children of Stone and Shadow

> For a look at variant medusas, consult the recent *Elite Opponents* article on these snaked-haired charmers.

The Gatekeepers claim that medusas were created by the daelkyr Orlassk, but the medusa priests of Cazhaak Draal offer their devotions to the Shadow. They claim that the Shadow shaped many of the creatures humans see as monsters, giving the harpy her deadly voice, hiding the displacer beast from its foes, and healing the wounds of the troll. These priests view the deities of the Sovereign Host as the true evil, comparing the exile of the Shadow to the fear with which many humans respond to medusas and other monsters.

Of course, some medusas do earn their evil reputation. Several revel in their powers and petrify lesser creatures for sport. But a medusa who calls this sort of attention to herself won't last long in one of the great cities of Khorvaire. Those medusas chosen to represent Droaam in the wider world are carefully vetted by Sheshka and officials of House Tharashk. The average medusa is more intelligent and cunning than the average human, and she understands the need to control her behavior among the soft people of Khorvaire. In Sharn, a medusa may move unfettered in the lawless districts, but if she enters a respectable neighborhood, she must wear eyeblinders, a metal visor secured with straps around forehead and chin; otherwise she may be attacked by the Blackened Book, Redcloak Battalion, or other agents of the law. Eyeblinders require a full minute to don or remove; in some cities, a medusa must have the blinders secured with a lock for the duration of her stay.

Despite their worship of the Shadow, medusas are no more inherently evil than humans or elves. Some are arrogant and proud, believing that their deadly gaze places them above mundane creatures. Others respond to the fear they encounter every day by despising those who fear them, a path that often leads to evil alignments. But many enjoy the same pleasures that humans do, and seek out song, good company, and the satisfaction of hard work. The medusas of Cazhaak Draal have a strong tradition of stonework, both architecture and purely aesthetic sculpture. In recent years, Councilor Kilk of Sharn has sought permission to bring in medusa architects and masons to perform work in Northedge, although to date the other councilors have refused to use city funds to pay for the services of monsters.

Medusa Customs

The gaze of a medusa can petrify even an ally, and as a result, a medusa does not meet the gaze of a person with whom it is conversing. Where she directs her eyes indicates her esteem for the person. She drops her eyes toward the ground to show respect, or looks up and over the person if she wishes to indicate disdain; when speaking to an equal, she glances to the left or right. If she wishes to show trust, she directs her gaze to the person, but closes her eyes.

While this may seem inconvenient to a human, it has little impact on a medusa. If a medusa concentrates, she can receive limited visual impressions from the serpents that make up her hair; as a result, though she seems to look elsewhere, she's actually looking through the eyes of her serpents. She can even use her serpents to see when she is blindfolded or has her eyes closed. However, she can still "see" in only one direction in this way; her serpents may look all around her, but she can't process the information from all of them at once. If a

medusa is relying solely on the visual input from her serpents, she suffers a -2 penalty on Spot and Search checks.

A medusa uses its living mane for many purposes. In addition to serving as weapons and a supplemental form of eyesight, a medusa's serpents also help her communicate. The motions of the serpents often reflect a medusa's mood, and a DM should consider the state of a medusa's mane when describing her actions. The medusas of Cazhaak Draal have developed a simple language called Serpentine, which is based on the motions and hissing of their snakes. Serpentine has no written aspect and can be spoken only by a medusa, but any creature can use Speak Language to learn to understand it. A medusa must learn Serpentine normally, but it is available to her as a bonus language.

The gaze of a medusa is a powerful weapon, but most medusas don't think of it as deadly. A petrified victim can be restored to life, after all; within their own society, medusas often use petrification as a way to preserve mortally wounded kin, so they can be restored at a later time when healing magic is available. Likewise, medusas dying of old age often choose to be petrified before they fully pass on; Cazhaak Draal contains a great catacomb filled with the stone remnants of respected medusa elders. This ties to the love of stonework common in the culture; when a medusa looks at a statue, she sees the life it represents.

While some medusas take an interest in archery, in general the medusas of Cazhaak Draal have little interest in physical combat; they prefer to win their battles with magic or cunning. Sorcerers, rogues, and experts are all common among the citizens of Cazhaak Draal; the city of stone is also home to smaller numbers of clerics, adepts, rangers, and fighters, with the latter specializing in ranged combat.

Medusa's Kiss
Transmutation
Level: Adept 3, Cleric 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 3; caster must be a medusa
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: One petrified creature
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: See text
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

A soft amber glow envelopes the creature, suffusing its form with sparkling, golden motes of light even as life returns to it.

Born with the ability to petrify others with a gaze, the medusas long ago developed a ritual to counteract their deadly gift. *Medusa's kiss* reverses the effects of a medusa's gaze, restoring a petrified creature and its equipment to its normal state. *Medusa's kiss* will not counteract any other form of petrification and cannot be used to transform stone objects into flesh.

This spell can be cast only by a medusa.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

Psionics in Eberron

By Keith Baker

Psionics have been a part of **Dungeons & Dragons**for decades. But how do psychic abilities actually fit into a world of swords and sorcery? What can be done to make them feel integral to the setting, and not entirely alien? This article examines some of the theories behind psychic powers, and it discusses ways in which a Dungeon Master can increase or reduce the presence of psionics in his game.

Dal Quor and Xoriat

The nature of the Outer Planes is a subject hotly debated by the sages of Eberron. One school of thought claims that the planes are interwoven aspects of a single greater reality. Every battle on Eberron has its reflection on Shavarath, and even the smallest flame touches Fernia. According to this theory, all living creatures have innate spiritual connections to many of the planes. These threads are what draw the soul to Dal Quor to dream, or to Dolurrh after death.

Some think that two planes in particular touch the minds of mortals. Dal Quor, the region of dreams, supposedly binds itself deeply to the imagination of mortal creatures. Xoriat, the source of madness, also serves as a font for all powerful emotions: Some believe that overwhelming rage, sorrow, and even joy all flow from the boiling well of Xoriat.

If this is true, psionic power is the energy of the planes channeled and focused through the lens of the mortal mind. The psychic surge of the wilder draws on the raw emotions of Xoriat, while the focused abilities of the psion are dreams forced upon reality.

Sarlona: The Kingdom of the Mind

Sarlona is the seat of psionic power in the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*. This is the homeland of the Inspired and the kalashtar, and duergar, dromites, elans, maenads, and half-giants are all said to live on or under Sarlona.

The elders of Adar believe that the continent once was tied closely to Dal Quor, and that this explains the plethora of psionic creatures. However, all manifest zones linked to Dal Quor faded when the plane was thrown out of alignment.

Regardless of the reason, Sarlona is home to many psionic creatures, and it is the simplest place to introduce material from the *Expanded Psionic Handbook* or *Complete Psionic*. A Dungeon Master who wishes to restrict the role of psionics in her adventures can insist that psionics have some tie to Sarlona; a changeling who wishes to become a telepath may have to find a kalashtar teacher in Adar, just as the Shadow (of pulp fame, not the Dark Six!) had to travel to Tibet to learn to cloud men's minds.

The realms of Sarlona and the powers of its inhabitants will be explored in greater detail in the upcoming sourcebook, *Secrets of Sarlona*.

Psionics in Khorvaire

If Sarlona has ties to Dal Quor, Khorvaire has a long history with Xoriat. The mind flayers are iconic figures of the realm of madness, and the psionic powers of these aberrations are legendary. The illithids employed psionic tools and weapons in the war against the Empire of Dhakaan, and these treasures could surface in the present day. Both daelkyr and mind flayers enjoy corrupting other creatures, and the fruits of these experiments can be seen in the illithid heritage traits that can appear in almost any creature. Cults of the Dragon Below produce wilders and ardents who draw their power from madness and raw emotion. Manifest zones could affect psionics just as they do magic; as such, a zone linked to Xoriat would be an excellent place to find a caller in darkness, and wilders of the Dragon Below would build their holy sites in these fortresses of terror.

These ties to Xoriat allow psionics to appear in the wilds of Khorvaire . . . but what about its civilizations? If a DM wants to give psionics a deeper role in his campaign, here are a few paths to explore.

The Lhazaar Principalities. The people of the Lhazaar Principalities cling to many traditions of old Sarlona -- traditions long forgotten by the citizens of the Five Nations. Psionics weren't common in Sarlona before the coming of the Inspired, but a few kingdoms explored the psionic arts, and a few of the principalities may have preserved these techniques, albeit hidden from prying eyes. If a DM is using *Complete Psionic*, the Six Hidden Houses easily could be spread across the inland region of the Lhazaar Principalities.

Quori Inspiration. The Inspired and the kalashtar are gifted psions, and either group could choose to share their techniques with the people of Khorvaire. In the case of the kalashtar, this would likely be a purely benevolent action, combined with teaching the principles of the Path of Light. On the other side of the coin, if the Dreaming Dark begins training psions, it probably has a hidden agenda . . . for example, creating a cell that will eventually be tricked into serving as host bodies for Quori spirits. The Dreaming Dark can hide its hand easily by using possessed humans, so people won't realize they are being trained by the Inspired. While the kalashtar are likely to focus on powers with peaceful applications, the Dreaming Dark may create more sinister forces -- a guild of soulknife assassins, mercenary psychic warriors, or telepathic spies, who might not even realize the role they are playing in the great game of the Quori.

National Security. In a time of war, nations are always searching for new weapons. With the increasing level of commerce between Sarlona and Khorvaire, the leaders of the Five Nations are slowly learning about the potential of psionic powers. Many may ignore these foreign traditions. Aundair places its trust in arcane magic, while Thrane relies on the divine might of the Silver Flame. However, Karrnath and Breland may choose to explore the psionic arts, either to find ways to counter telepathic spies or to create their own psychic operatives. The King's Dark Lanterns of Breland may be training a unit of lurks,

while the Karrns are exploring the battlefield potential of kineticists. Of course, what happens if the top psions in the agency turn out to be Quori sleeper agents?

Removing Psionics from Eberron

This article focuses on ways to expand the role of psionics in the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*. However, some Dungeon Masters may prefer to remove these powers entirely, creating a world in which magic is the sole source of supernatural power.

By default, the primary vector for psionics are the kalashtar, Inspired, and land of Sarlona. If a DM wants to ignore psionics, the simplest answer is to strip these elements from the game. It's easy enough to say that the Quori remain trapped in Dal Quor and never touched the minds of mortals; all that remains is for the DM to decide what new force dominates Sarlona. The Lords of Dust could be the masters of Riedra. It might be a kingdom of aberrations, ruled by illithid tyrants and vile aboleths. Or it might be a mundane human nation, maintaining traditions abandoned by the settlers of Khorvaire.

If a DM doesn't want to use psionics, but still enjoys the story of the kalashtar and their struggle against the Dreaming Dark, there are other options. Instead of psychic power, the kalashtar and Inspired could be natural sorcerers, with an innate talent for shaping arcane energy. A DM who takes this approach may wish to create an arcane equivalent of the *mind seed* power, as this is a critical tool for the Quori agenda; if such a spell exists, it will be a closely guarded treasure of the Dreaming Dark.

Optional Rule: Kalashtar and Inspired Without Psionics

If you choose not to use psionics in a campaign, make the following changes to kalashtar racial traits.

Favored Class: Sorcerer.

Natural Sorcerer: When determining the bonus spells received for any spontaneous arcane spellcasting class (such as bard or sorcerer), a kalashtar receives a +2 bonus to his effective Charisma. This bonus has no effect on the saving throw DC of spells, and it does not allow the kalashtar to cast spells of a higher level than he would normally have access to. This takes the place of the Naturally Psionic racial trait.

Spell-Like Abilities: *Mindlink* (1/day). Use the description of the ability as described in the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*. This takes the place of the psi-like *mindlink* ability.

These same modifications should be applied to Inspired empty vessels, although they do not receive the *mindlink* spell-like ability.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting* and *Shadows of the Last War,* he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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Dragonshards

The Children of Khyber

By Keith Baker

"Your sigil creates, child of Cannith. Mine holds the power to destroy."

-- Rotting Bal, Tarkanan Enforcer

The aberrant lords of the War of the Mark wielded terrible powers. Madness, flame, and plague were the least of their weapons. These tales inspired the superstitions that haunt the bearers of aberrant dragonmarks to this day. But in the centuries since the War of the Mark, no aberrant mark has ever bestowed the sort of powers seen in the past.

Until now.

Over the last few years, aberrant marks have been appearing with greater frequency. And for the first time in over a thousand years, some who carry these marks have seen the twisted sigil grow in size and power . . . mirroring the Lesser and Greater Dragonmarks of the pure houses. These are the children of Khyber: the aberrant lords of the age to come.

The child of Khyber is a prestige class designed for characters that bear aberrant marks. It draws on material presented in the *Dragonmarked*sourcebook, notably the Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark and Greater Aberrant Dragonmark feats. While you will thus need *Dragonmarked* to pursue this prestige class, the background information presented here should prove useful to any character that possesses an aberrant dragonmark.

Becoming a Child of Khyber

Like the pure dragonmarks, aberrant dragonmarks are a mystery. One cannot simply choose to be a child of Khyber. It may be random chance, or the Dragon Below may be picking its champions in a war that is to come. However it works, the power seems to choose its vessel, not the other way around. Most children of Khyber do share a few common traits aside from their dragonmarks: They are uniformly gifted people -- a cut above the

common masses. And most possess a dark outlook on life; while they may not be evil, many are cynical, ruthless, brooding, selfish, or even insane. This could reflect the influence of the aberrant dragonmark, or merely the fact that those who bear aberrant marks often lead difficult lives: Whatever the reason, truly noble souls cannot become children of Khyber.

If your character meets the prerequisites, you can choose to make him a child of Khyber. But this is not the result of a conscious choice on his part; it does not reflect training or dedication. One day, his aberrant dragonmark grows larger, and he feels the dark power of Khyber in his blood.

Child of Khyber Entry Requirements

Alignment: Any nongood
Skills: 7 ranks in any two skills
Feat: Aberrant Dragonmark

At present, most children of Khyber are loners. However, the criminal House Tarkanan is extremely interested in recruiting the children of Khyber. Many of the Cults of the Dragon Below believe those who bear aberrant dragonmarks are blessed by Khyber, and aberrant heirs can wield great influence among such cults. The children of Khyber are few in number and spread across Khorvaire, but as more time passes, more and more will place their powers in the service of a greater cause.

Table 1: The Child of Khyber Hit Die: d8

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+2	+2	Aberrant affinity, Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+3	Additional action points, improved aberrant dragonmark
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+3	Improved lesser aberrant dragonmark
4th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Greater Aberrant Dragonmark
5th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Aberrant burst

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Disable Device, Disguise, Forgery, Gather Information, Hide, Intimidate, Knowledge (local), Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Search, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Spot, Survival, Tumble.

Class Features

As a child of Khyber, your greatest strength is the power of your aberrant dragonmark. As you advance in the class, you unlock the hidden powers of your mark, while learning skills that can help you survive in an unfriendly world.

Aberrant Affinity (Ex): As you master the powers of you aberrant mark, you gain a measure of influence over others touched by Khyber's power. You may add your class level to all Charisma-related checks dealing with aberrations or people who possess aberrant dragonmarks.

Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark: At 1st level you gain Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark as a bonus feat. You do not have to meet the skill prerequisites for the feat.

Additional Action Points (Ex): At 2nd level and beyond, your action point maximum per level is increased by 2.

Improved Aberrant Dragonmark (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, you may use the spell-like ability granted by your aberrant dragonmark one additional time per day.

Improved Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, you may use the spell-like ability granted by your lesser aberrant dragonmark one additional time per day.

Greater Aberrant Dragonmark: At 4th level you gain Greater Aberrant Dragonmark as a bonus feat. You do not have to meet the skill prerequisites for the feat.

Aberrant Burst (Ex): At 5th level you gain the ability to call on inner reserves of strength to fuel your aberrant dragonmark, but this leaves you drained and ill. Once per day when you use one of your aberrant dragonmark powers, you can declare it to be an aberrant burst. The caster level and saving throw DC of the effect are both increased by 3; however, you are sickened for 1d4 rounds after using the ability.

Playing a Child of Khyber

You can feel your power festering within you. It's different for every child of Khyber. One feels a chill no warmth can push away, while another complains of fire burning beneath his skin. An heir with the power of *confusion* feels the force of madness in his mind, trying to claw its way out and feast on the thoughts of others. Your mark may bring you pain. It may whisper to you as you try to sleep. But it is a part of you. To others it may sound like a curse; but without that knot of dark energy within, you don't know who you'd be.

Odds are you've had a difficult life. Most aberrant heirs do. Even before your mark appeared, you felt a distance from those around you. And how did your mark first manifest? Did you char a childhood friend with an accidental burst of flame, or *charm* the object of your unrequited affections? Whatever happened, once the mark appeared, you were likely the subject of fear and suspicion. Perhaps you were driven from your home, or perhaps you chose to travel, hiding your mark and finding comfort in the company of strangers. Only one friend has remained with you through all your journeys -- that twisted mark that burns on your skin, the power waiting to be unleashed.

And now your mark is growing. Not just the sigil on the skin, or the power you can channel through it. You can feel a darkness flowing through you, growing with each passing day. You know that there is no place for you in the light: You can feel it in your soul. But only you can decide if you will embrace this shadow that lies within and accept your destiny as one of the children of Khyber . . . or whether you resist the call of darkness, and follow the hero's path.

Combat

The children of Khyber can follow many different paths, and there is no single style of combat that applies to them all. If you are a barbarian with the power of *fire shield*, you'll want to call on your flames and charge into the fray . . . while if you're a rogue with the abilities of *charm person* and *suggestion,* you'll want to hang back and let others do the fighting. Look for synergy between your aberrant powers and the skills of your base class, and use these to determine your optimum strategies.

Advancement

You didn't choose your powers. You never asked to manifest an aberrant dragonmark, and you certainly didn't expect it to expand further, spreading out across your skin like a cancer. You've heard of aberrant dragonmarks, but it has been over a thousand years since the world has seen one of such size and power. Only you know

what it means to you. When your mark grew, did you revel in your newfound might? Or were you terrified, worried about what might happen next?

A child of Khyber has no set path of advancement. As with combat tactics, everything depends on your original class background and on the powers of your mark. Your skills are oriented around survival: Those who discover your true nature will fear your power, and keen senses and the ability to move unseen in city or the wilds may be your only hope in the days to come. Feats such as Hideous Strength and Death Curse can further enhance the powers of your dragonmark, but if your background is that of a rogue or fighter, you may be better off choosing feats that build on those skills.

Resources

You may never have seen another child of Khyber; your aberrant kin are few in number and spread across the world. As a result, you have no special resources to draw upon. Children of Khyber often feel an instinctive bond with one another, a reflection of your aberrant affinity class ability . . . but this doesn't mean that another aberrant will risk her life for you.

If your aberrant mark earns you a place in House Tarkanan or in a cult of the Dragon Below, you may gain access to additional resources. See *Sharn: City of Towers* for more information on the benefits of associating with House Tarkanan.

Children of Khyber in the World

"My ancestors put your kind to the sword, warped one. Let me show you what happens when you challenge your betters."

-- Jaxon d'Cannith, Cannith Sorcerer

Less than four years have passed since the first child of Khyber felt his aberrant dragonmark growing and spreading across his skin. Whether it is the will of the Dragon Below or some sinister after-effect of the Mourning, the spread of aberrant power is a recent development. Most children of Khyber choose to conceal their powers and keep to the shadows. But one organization is actively searching for those who bear aberrant dragonmarks: House Tarkanan.

Daily Life

Any bloodline can be touched by the aberrant taint. None can predict where or when an aberrant mark will manifest . . . and as such, none can predict the lifestyle of the aberrant heir. Some become wanderers; others turn to lives of crime. A few conceal their marks and continue their normal lives, ignoring the whispering voice of Khyber at the edge of their thoughts and dreams.

House Tarkanan is a criminal guild with growing influence in many of the great cities of Khorvaire. Children of Khyber who join House Tarkanan are trained in the use of their aberrant marks and also encouraged to develop skills that can serve the guild directly. An heir with powers of *charm person* or *suggestion* usually becomes a con artist or extortionist, while one with a *poison* touch may be trained as an assassin. The lords of House Tarkanan believe that a second War of the Mark is inevitable, and this filters through the daily life of house members: Tarkanans learn to see their comrades as fellow soldiers in an army and to consider all non-aberrants as potential enemies.

Organization

As a whole, the children of Khyber have no organization. They are spread across Khorvaire, and most hide from the light. However, House Tarkanan provides a haven and a power base for those aberrants it locates. House Tarkanan is organized as a mocking reflection of a dragonmarked house. At the bottom it is a criminal guild, focusing on the businesses of theft and murder. Above this, the "barons" manage regional affairs and coordinate the continuing effort to locate and train additional aberrant heirs. Profits from the activities of the house are reinvested in additional safehouses and supplies, as the leaders prepare for their eventual war.

The current matriarch of House Tarkanan is Thora Tavin (LE female human rogue 6/assassin 6/child of Khyber 2). Thora holds court in Sharn, but she has a supernatural gift for sensing the presence of others with aberrant marks (a variation of the Shield of Siberys feat presented in *Dragonmarked*) and she spends much of her time traveling Khorvaire in search of new recruits.

NPC Reactions

While the power of superstition has faded with time, many people are still suspicious of those who bear aberrant marks. This is especially strong in smaller communities. In a vast metropolis like Sharn, where people deal with harpies, warforged, gargoyles, and ogres, an aberrant mark doesn't seem so frightening; but in a small Thranish farming village, people still consider the aberrant mark to be the touch of darkness. So there is no hard rule, but a child of Khyber may receive an unfriendly reaction from those who discover his true nature . . . or at least a grudging and suspicious indifference.

Some aberrants are coming to the conclusion that they should stand together in the face of fear and possible persecution, and a child of Khyber has a greater ability to influence those who bear aberrant marks. However, this is not enough to ensure a friendly reaction from all aberrants; many remain suspicious and indifferent to all strangers, even others bearing aberrant dragonmarks.

Children of Khyber in Your Game

The children of Khyber are few in number and secretive by nature, and they should not have a major impact on the daily lives of adventurers. However, House Tarkanan could come to be an important ally for characters that possess aberrant marks . . . or a dangerous enemy of a party working in the service of the dragonmarked houses. An individual child of Khyber could be a vicious killer, driven mad by his power; a cool and calculating assassin, seeking vengeance against the dragonmarked houses for the wrongs done to his ancestors; or a renegade unjustly persecuted for the mark she bears on her skin, simply trying to survive in a hostile world. And is the resurgence of aberrant power a harbinger of a great evil on the rise? Might the dragonmark houses renew their persecution of the aberrant heirs? The answers to these questions are in your hands. You could choose to simply use House Tarkanan as a colorful criminal guild, distinguished by the powers of its members; or you could make it the center of a campaign revolving around a renewed war between the aberrants and their pure-mark cousins.

Adaptation

If you wish to provide children of Khyber with even greater versatility, the improved aberrant dragonmark and improved lesser aberrant dragonmark class abilities could give a character the choice of an additional use of an existing ability or allow him to choose an additional ability from the appropriate list, meaning that a 4th-level child of Khyber could have two aberrant mark abilities, two lesser aberrant mark abilities, and one greater aberrant mark ability. Because aberrant dragonmark abilities are not thematically linked in the same way as the pure marks, this can provide a child of Khyber with considerable versatility, so think carefully before incorporating this optional rule.

Sample Child of Khyber

Rotting Bal derives his name from the sores that cover his skin, an apparent side effect of his powerful aberrant dragonmark. Bal was born in the Shadow Marches, in a hidden monastery dedicated to the Dragon Below; he learned martial arts at the feet of a dolgaunt master. But he always felt a certain distance from the other monks. The promises of Xoriat felt empty: Bal was driven by different visions. When Thora Tavin came to his monastery, he knew she held the key to his destiny. Bal is utterly devoted to Thora and would give his life to protect her. With his lethal touch, he is one of the deadliest people in Sharn, and he serves House Tarkanan as assassin and enforcer. While he is fanatically devoted to the Tarkanan cause and has no compunctions about killing, he is no fool; he can be reasoned with and would rather avoid unnecessary conflict if possible.

The Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark and Greater Aberrant Dragonmark feats can be found in *Dragonmarked*. Death Curse and Hideous Strength will be presented in an upcoming Dragonshard, but you can replace them with other feats for now.

Rotting Bal CR 10
Male human monk 6/child of Khyber 4
LEMedium humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +11
Languages Common, Undercommon

AC 18, touch 17, flat-footed 15
(+3 Dex, +1 deflection, +1 natural, +2 Wisdom, +1 monk)
hp 54 (10 HD)
Immune normaldisease
Resist evasion
Fort +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +12; +2 against enchantment
Action Points 2

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares)
Meleeunarmed strike +10/+5 (1d8+3) or
touch attack +10 (*vampiric touch*, *slay living,* or trip) or
unarmed strike +9/+9/+4 (1d8+3) with flurry of blows
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +14
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip, Power Attack, *ki* strike (magic), slow fall (30 ft.)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th):
2/day -- *shield* (CL 5th), *vampiric touch* (4d6; CL 8th)
1/day -- *slay living* (DC 15; CL 10th)
Combat Gear two *potions of mage armor, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of bull's strength,* potion bracer

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Abilities Str 16*, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 10
SQ aberrant affinity (+4)
Feats Aberrant Dragonmark, Combat Expertise, Death Curse*, Deflect Arrows[B], Greater Aberrant Dragonmark [B], Hideous Strength*, Improved Grapple[B], Improved Trip[B], Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark[B], Power Attack
Skills Balance +9, Climb +6, Heal +4, Hide +14, Jump +26, Knowledge(local) +3, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +7, Search +7, Sense Motive +6, Spot +11, Tumble +13
Possessions*gauntlets of ogre power*, *amulet of natural armor +1,boots of striding and springing, darkweave cloak of resistance +1, ring of protection +1*

Hook "Shall we compare our gifts, child of the Dragon Above?"

About the Author

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